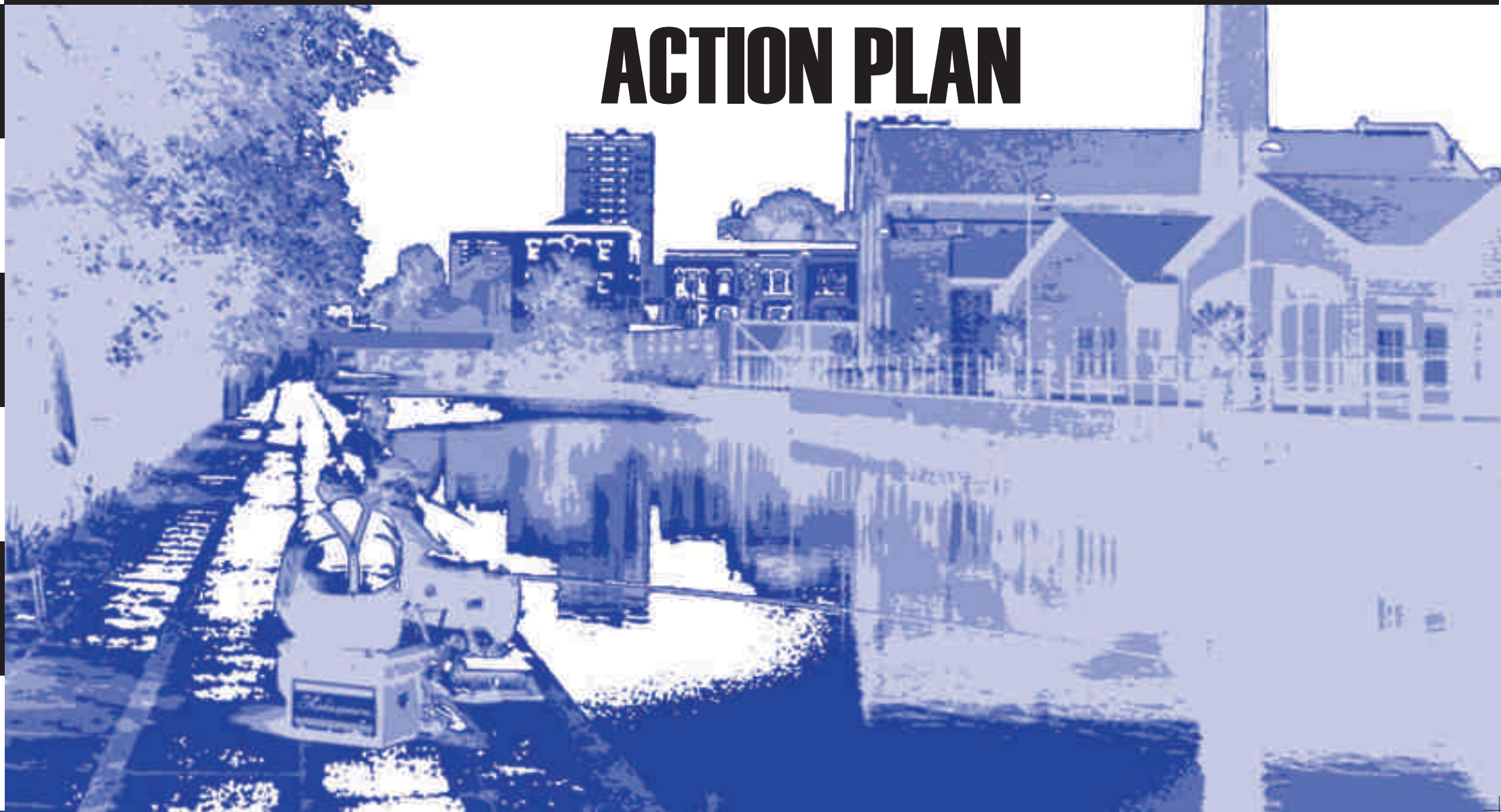
British Waterways

# Hertford Union Canal

# ACTION PLAN



# Hertford Union Canal

# ACTION PLAN

**Draft**

**November 2001**

Prepared for British Waterways London

by

British Waterways

Waterway Conservation & Regeneration Group

ARCHITECTURE • LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE • PLANNING
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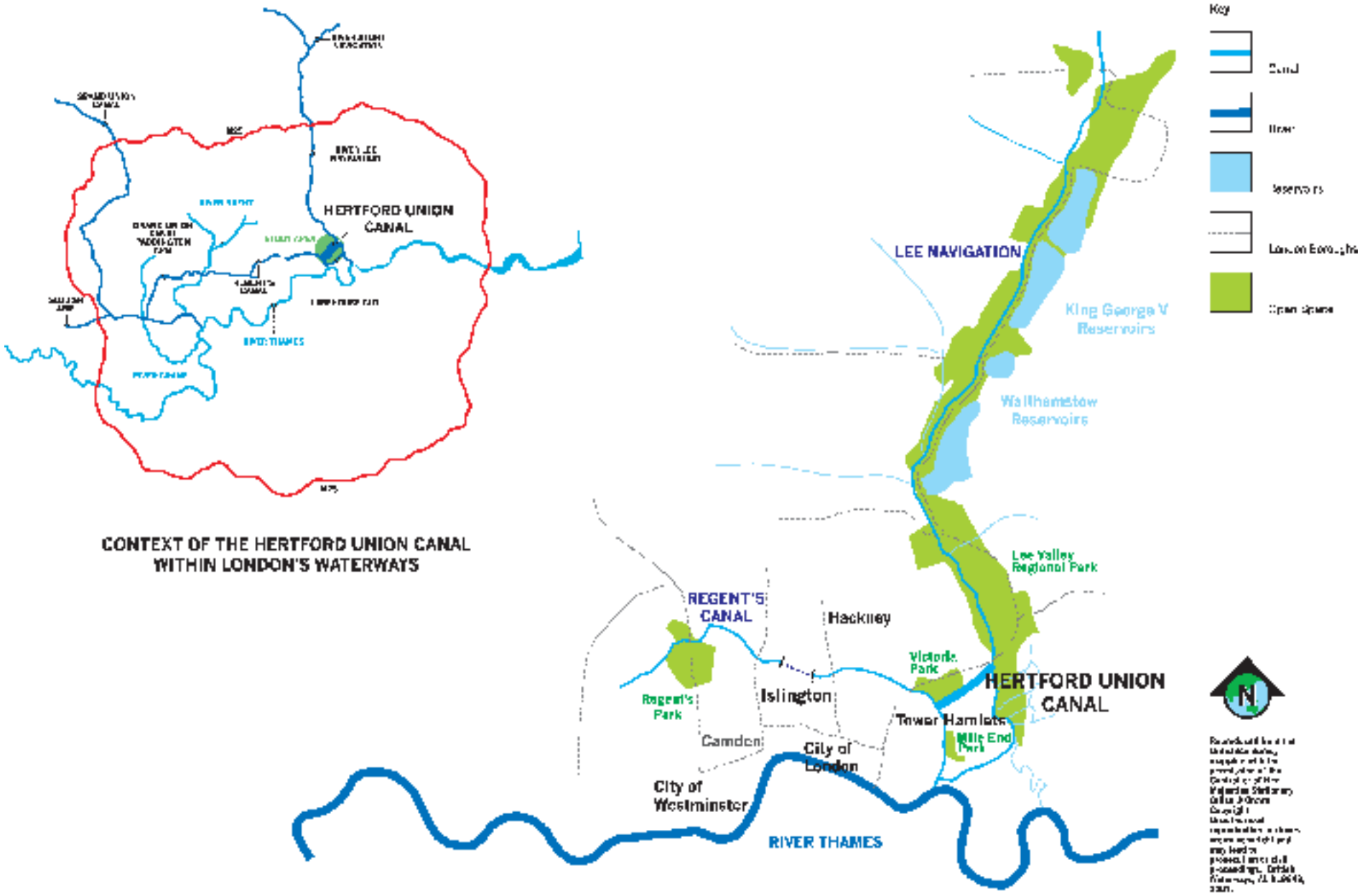
1.1 Location Map

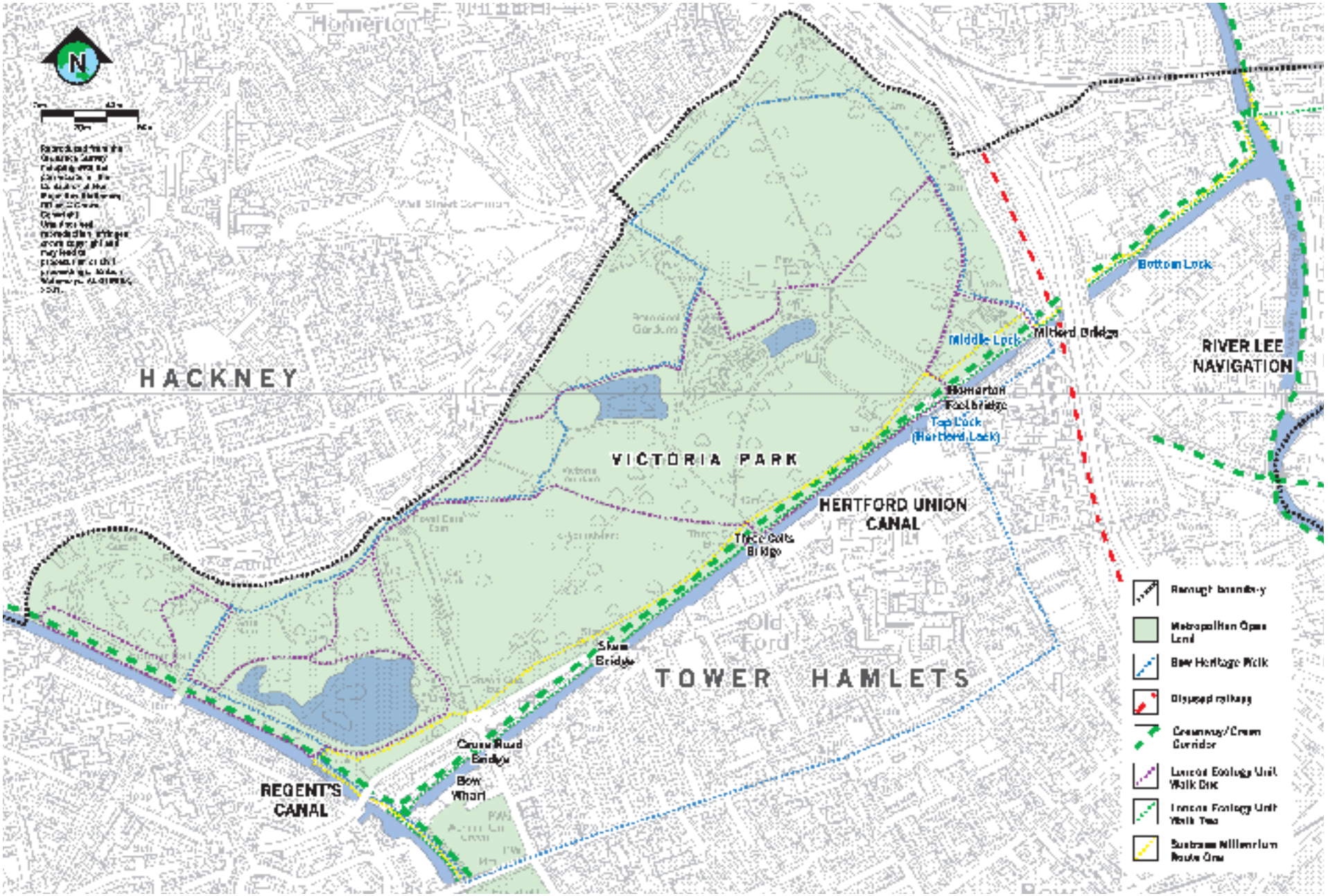
1.2 Context Map

1.3 Background & Objectives

# 1 INTRODUCTION




CONTEXT OF THE HERTFORD UNION CANAL WITHIN LONDON'S WATERWAYS


Homerton
HACKNEY
VICTORIA PARK
HERTFORD UNION CANAL
RIVER LEE NAVIGATION
Bottom Lock
Middle Lock
Millford Bridge
Homerton Footbridge
Top Lock (Hertford Lock)
Three Colts Bridge
Old Ford
TOWER HAMLETS
Sluice Bridge
Grove Road Bridge
Bow Wharf
REGENT'S CANAL
Borough boundary
Metropolitan Open Land
Lea Heritage Walk
Disused railway
Greenway/Green Corridor
Local Ecology Unit Walk One
Local Ecology Unit Walk Two
Sustrans Millennium Route One

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## Background

The Hertford Union Canal is two kilometres long and is situated in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, in the neighbourhood of Bow.

It is a strategically important waterway because it links the Regent's Canal and the River Lea Navigation, and so ultimately, it is connected in the west with the 2000 miles of the national waterway system, and in the east with the River Thames and the Thames Estuary. On a more local level, the towpath also creates a route, linking important open spaces (Mile End Park, Victoria Park and the Lee Valley Regional Park) as well as providing a traffic-free route between workplaces, homes, schools and shops, for the people of London, and for visitors.

## History of the Hertford Union Canal

The Hertford Union Canal was opened in 1830, after being financed by Sir George Duckett, to link the Regent's Canal and the Lee Navigation. Before this, boats travelling from the Lee to the Midlands, via the Regent's Canal and the Grand Junction had to continue down the Lee to Limehouse Cut, enter the Thames through Limehouse Barge Lock, return through the Regent's Canal Ship Lock and negotiate the four locks below Old Ford. The Hertford Union was therefore an important short cut linking the two trade routes. For a time, the Hertford Union was also a means of delivering water from the Lee to the Regent's Canal, although this was not satisfactory and was soon discontinued.

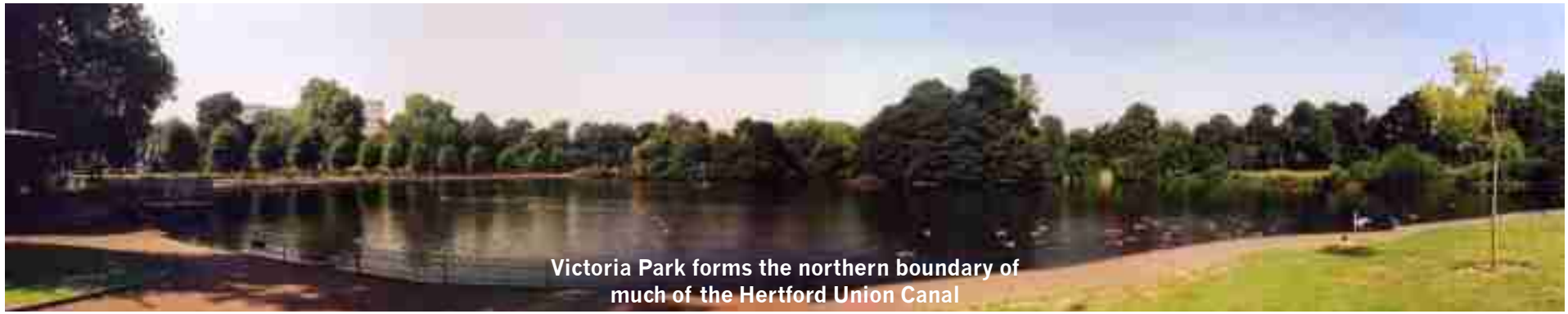
The system of London canals was initially a success, using horse drawn barges to transport bulky loads like coal and building materials. The Hertford Union was acquired by the Regent's Canal Company in 1855. Inevitably, the development of the railways reduced the importance of the Hertford Union Canal as a freight transport route. The canals were nationalised in 1948 and in the 1960's came under the administration of British Waterways.

By the 1840's, this part of London was becoming overcrowded, and a public petition with 30,000 signatures was presented to Queen Victoria for a park to alleviate the effects of the spread of the East End. Victoria Park was laid out between 1842-45 by James Pennethorne, an assistant of John Nash, at a cost of £50,000. It covers 90 hectares (217 acres) and is London's oldest municipal park. It quickly became an important recreation resource and venue for political assembly, like the Chartists meetings of 1848 and later, suffragette meetings. After suffering bomb damage and being used for food production during World War Two, some of the Victorian structures were demolished, including the Palm House. Further damage was suffered in the storms of 1987. The park is now being restored and the opportunity to create a potentially important interface with the canal must be seized.

## The Hertford Union Canal Today

The Hertford Union Canal is designated by Tower Hamlets Council as a Site of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. These sites are considered to be the best examples of London's wildlife habitats and are often of particular significance within large areas of otherwise heavily built up areas of London. The canal is an important part of the Green Chain through Tower Hamlets, linking the Regent's Canal and the Lee Corridor.

Today the waterway is mainly used as a leisure and recreation resource. Pleasure boaters use this stretch as part of their journey on the Regent's/Lee



Victoria Park forms the northern boundary of much of the Hertford Union Canal

Navigation/Limehouse Cut ring. Walkers take advantage of the traffic free situation, although apart from the London Ecology Unit walks and the Bow Heritage Trail there are few organised routes. Angling is popular on the Hertford Union and it is considered good fishing for an urban canal, despite suffering from the same issues facing urban canal angling nationally. Cycling is not normally promoted on towpaths, but as a traffic free and generally even graded route, towpaths are increasingly being used by cyclists and this stretch is no exception. The towpath between Wick Lane and Carpenters Road forms part of Sustrans Millennium Route 1.

## The Need for an Action Plan

In recent years, considerable work has been done to improve and regenerate the London Canals. The Waterway Conservation and Regeneration Group, British Waterways' inhouse environmental design and planning consultancy has developed the canal corridor study, and resulting action plan, as a tool to identify, and demonstrate, how the physical environment of the canal can be enhanced for the benefit of its users and act as a catalyst for regeneration. These studies have been successful in attracting partnership funding and support, and in encouraging sustainable development focused on the waterway.

## Objectives of the Study

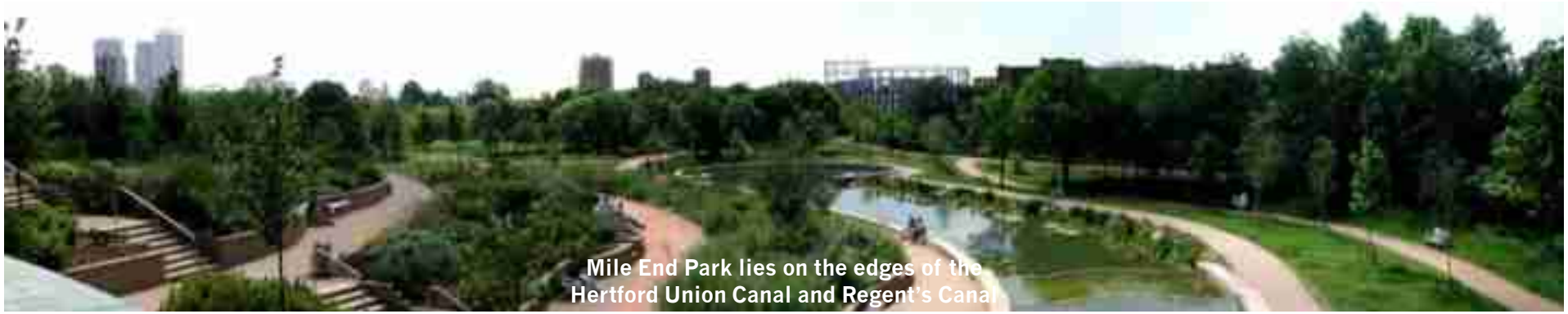
This study is intended to complement the Regent's Canal Action Plan and the Lee Navigation studies (the Hackney Wick Action Plan and the Hackney/ Haringey Action Plan), recognising the essential connecting role of the Hertford Union Canal between these two waterways, supporting the objectives of the British Waterways London Canals Business Plan. In particular it considers:

- Enhancement and additions to existing access, particularly for people with disabilities, including signage and interpretation;
- Highlighting physical and strategic links between the canal and neighbouring leisure amenities through public art, especially improving the links between the waterway and Victoria Park;
- Identify appropriate environmental improvements to the towpath, including accommodating Sustrans Millennium Route 1;
- Identifying ways of improving security and reducing the fear of crime;
- Improving lock areas;
- Identifying potential development sites adjacent to the canal;
- Establish an identity for the Hertford Union Canal, through environmental and facility improvements.

## Funding/Implementation

It is intented that this corridor study will form part of a wider regeneration strategy and the basis for any future bids for funding for any of the projects proposed. The Action Plan has been prepared to help the interested parties to develop partnerships and secure match funding to take the projects forward.

The Action Plan provides a framework for proposals to be prioritised and implemented, targeting resources in the short, medium and long term. Some of the actions/proposals will affect land owned by British Waterways and the local authority, whilst others will require the agreement of private landowners.



Mile End Park lies on the edges of the Hertford Union Canal and Regent's Canal

# 1 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Landscape Character

2.2 Planning Framework

2.3 Supporting Strategies

# 2 CONTEXT

The junction of the Hertford Union Canal and the Regent's Canal is surprisingly rustic, with interesting original stonework and mature trees. The recent leisure and recreation development at Bow Wharf brings activity and life to the area.

A post war, brick built warehouse unit dominates the north side of the beginning of the Hertford Union, restricting the towpath width and creating blind corners.

All along this canal, the towpath character is influenced by the utilitarian, pre-cast concrete covers of the underground cable system.

Recent residential development maximises the value of the waterside location, contrasting with older developments, like Lakeview, that do not positively address the waterfront.

The factory on Chisenhale Road is derelict, punctuating the residential housing landscape, but the site is likely to be redeveloped/renovated in due course.

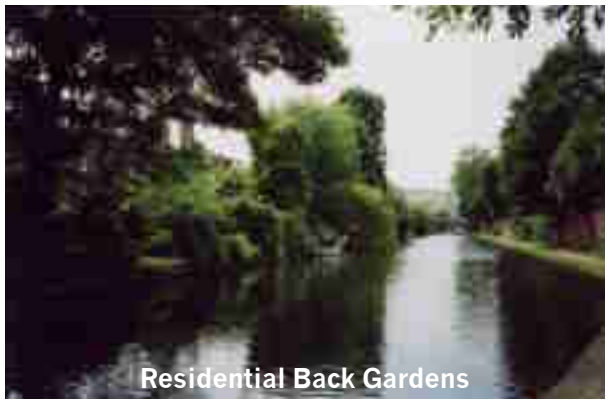
As the towpath approaches Skew Bridge, the garden walls of the established housing to the north enclose the towing path. The terraced houses with mature gardens to the south reflect the nineteenth century context of the canal, despite the tower blocks in the background.

After Skew Bridge, the north side of the canal is bordered by Victoria Park, with avenues of mature trees and extensive areas of mown grass visible thorough the railings, but with no access from the towing path. The south side has been completely redeveloped with apartments and small business units, giving a sterile appearance to the waterfront.

Views into Victoria Park continue after Three Colts Bridge, but again there is no direct access between the park and the towing path. Part of the south side, immediately after the bridge, is in the course of redevelopment. The apartments on the south side, as the canal approaches Hertford Lock, have been positioned obliquely, creating a series of interesting spaces for, rather than a flat waterfront.

The lock cottages and mature trees on the north before Homerton Bridge create a sense of enclosure, and mark the end of the visual influence of Victoria park on the landscape of the canal corridor. At Hertford Lock (Top Lock), the towpath descends steeply under Homerton Bridge, a nineteenth century cast iron footbridge.

Bow Wharf



Residential Back Gardens

Residential Apartments

After the footbridge, the land to the north is retained by a distinctive, concrete aggregate wall. The land is thickly planted with trees, giving a verdant appearance, but many are diseased and others are creating pressure on the wall. To the south, enclosure is created by continuous residential development. A stretch of Japanese knotweed creates a hedge at one point.

The towing path descends very steeply around Middle Lock, in order to pass under Mitford Bridge, with a succession of blind corners and a strange metal lip to the canal edge. The bridge has been painted white, and there is considerable graffiti that has been there sometime. The blind corners and graffiti make this a slightly threatening area.

After Mitford Bridge, access to the towpath from Wick Lane is by a wide ramp, presently used by the adjacent pub as a seating area, with the gates kept locked outside licensing hours. The towing path then opens out, passing the abutments of a dismantled railway bridge. Gated access to the disused railway line is overgrown and blocked. The towpath then passes under the A102M/Wansbeck Road, with the usual sterile concrete environment.

Along this section, the canal corridor to the north and south is dominated by large factory units, a marked contrast to the leafy, suburban residential landscape of the previous stretches. The service sheds of the generating company create hidden corners and awkwardly placed seating areas with extensive graffiti on the walls. Elsewhere, thick planting of decorative shrubs protects the walls from graffiti.

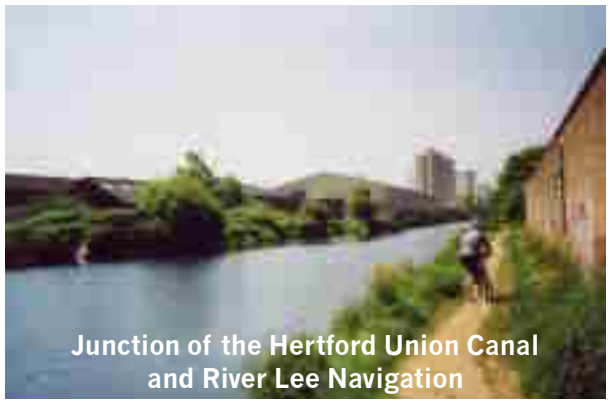
Shortly after Bottom Lock the paved towpath ends abruptly and continues as a narrow compacted gravel path, with wide grassy edges and a herbaceous canal margin. Although enclosed on both sides by factory units, the canal corridor is wide and relatively verdant. At the junction of the canal and the River Lee Navigation, relatively new factory units on the south give way to older industrial buildings, now apparently derelict.

The wide expanse of water at the junction is enclosed by the shed like units of Bow Industrial Park.

The towpath of the Hertford Union Canal continues to the bridge at Carpenters Road, with a steep ramp to street level. The towpath continues on the other side of the River Lee navigation, accessed from the street by a steep, difficult to use, cobbled ramp.

Victoria Park

Wick Lane Access



Junction of the Hertford Union Canal and River Lee Navigation

## TOWER HAMLETS UDP (1998)

### Strategic Policies

#### The Environment

**ST5** – To ensure that development contributes to a safe, welcoming and attractive environment which is accessible to all groups of people;

**ST7** – To protect and enhance open spaces of amenity value, particularly areas of nature conservation importance and to encourage the creation of new wildlife habitats.

#### Transport

**ST33** – To reduce the impact of heavy lorry traffic by promoting greater use of rail and water for the movement of freight.

#### Open Space, Leisure and Recreation

**ST37** – To improve the physical appearance of the Borough by creating a more attractive environment for those who live and work here by maintaining and enhancing the Borough's existing parks and other open spaces;

**ST38** – To provide and increase the range of leisure and recreational facilities where a need is demonstrated and opportunities arise;

**ST39** – To ensure participation in recreational facilities is safe and accessible for all to use and enjoy;

#### Arts, Entertainment and Tourism

**ST43** – To encourage the use of high quality public art and craft work as a means of environmental enhancement.

### Policies

#### The Environment

**DEV46 – Protection of Waterway Corridors**

Waterways and Water Bodies will be protected and promoted for their contribution to the character of the Borough and as important open areas within the Borough by :

- Conserving existing areas of value and, where possible seeking to restore and enhance the natural elements of the Waterway Environment;
- Resisting the loss of water protection areas;
- Supporting initiatives which will result in improvements to water quality;
- Where appropriate promoting public access in waterway corridors;
- Identifying appropriate locations for water related recreation along waterway corridors subject to Nature Conservation considerations; and
- Resisting development which will have an adverse impact on the water environment, including the quality of surface and ground water, on public access to waterways and on water related recreation.

**DEV47 – Development Affecting Water Areas**

New Development Proposals adjacent to the rivers, canals and other water areas will be expected to :

- Retain, and if necessary, convert structurally sound and architecturally interesting buildings or groups of buildings;
- Retain and/or re-use historic artefacts, materials and features;
- Be designed to conform to the general scale and form of the waterside environment or the scale and form of immediate riparian neighbours;
- Maintain important views into and out of the area;
- Where appropriate provide access to the waterside; and
- Not have an adverse effect on Nature Conservation.

**DEV 48 – Water Frontages**

New development having a water frontage will be expected to provide a walkway to an acceptable standard except where the walkway would conflict with commercial or transport interests.

**DEV 49 – Moored Vessels and Structures**

Proposals for moored vessels and structures in or over river or dock areas will only be permitted of they are essential to the movements of goods or passengers by water, or lead to an increase in the recreational use of the river, docks or basins. Such developments should:

- Be of a scale and design appropriate to the

location and kept in good state of repair and maintenance;

- Not interfere with navigation, give rise to siltation problems or affect the integrity of river walls and flood defences;
- Meet policies related to the setting of conservation areas, the setting of a listed building, and local and strategic views;
- Not impede access to water areas;
- Be accessible to people with disabilities;
- Accord with policies and standards related to ecology and conservation;
- Accord with the policies related to traffic generation and the standards for vehicle parking, servicing, and circulation; and
- Accord with the policies and standards related to the amenity of nearby users through loss of privacy, noise, pollution, late night activity and other nuisances.

**DEV 57 – Development Affecting Nature Conservation Areas**

The Council will not normally permit development which adversely affects a local Nature Reserve, a site of Nature Conservation Importance or a Green Chain.

**DEV 58 – Enhancement of Nature Conservation Sites**

Proposals which enhance the Nature Conservation value of sites or Green Chains will receive favourable consideration subject to other policies in the UDP.

**DEV 59 – Nature Conservation as a Land Use**

Nature Conservation is considered to be an appropriate land use for all open space.

**DEV 60 – Vacant/Derelict Land as Nature Areas**

The use and management of vacant or derelict land and other open spaces for Nature Conservation purposes will be promoted.

**DEV 61 – Management of Nature Conservation Areas**

Nature Conservation will be promoted in the management of council owned land by the production of Management Plans for important areas and by establishing ecological landscape design and management techniques. Other landowners will be encouraged to adopt a similar policy.

**DEV 62 – Development Adversely Affecting Nature Conservation Areas**

Where development proposals would destroy or adversely affect the ecologies of Sites of Nature Conservation Importance, the Council will:

1. Mitigation measures to be taken, or;
2. Comparable replacement if the loss is unavoidable.

The creation and enhancement of nature conservation features and the provision of public access may be sought in new developments where appropriate.

**DEV 63 – Green Chains and Walkways**

The Council designates the sites shown on the UDP proposals map and the schedules as Green Chains. Within these areas, improved access including links with adjacent pedestrian routes, enhancement of their recreation potential, and the development of their value as natural habitats for wild animal and plant life will be sought.

**DEV 65 – Protection of Existing Walkways**

Existing walkways will be protected from development which would prevent free public access and/or harm their character.

**DEV 66 – Development of Pedestrian Footpath Network**

The Council will specify and develop a network of pedestrian footpaths, based on the Green Chains and the Strategic Riverside Walkway in conjunction with adjoining boroughs and LAPC.

## Housing

**HSG 23 – Residential Moorings**

The Council will consider applications for permanent and temporary residential mooring providing they meet the requirements of the Council's policies for riverside, canalside and dockside developments, see policies DEV 46 to DEV 49.

### Transport

**T20 – Strategic Pedestrian Route**

The Council will support the improvement of pedestrian facilities along the Canal and Riversides and the Northern Sewer Outfall Embankment is collaboration with adjoining Boroughs and the Lee Valley Regional Park to form a strategic pedestrian route network.

**T25 – Cyclists Needs in New Developments**

Cycle routes will be introduced in accordance with LPAC's strategic network in liaison with adjoining boroughs and the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority using, wherever possible, local access roads and the Green Chain. Provision for cycle lanes and cycle crossings will be made where the cycle routes use the primary or secondary network.

**T30 – Use of the Waterways for Freight**

The maximum feasible use of the waterways for the movement of freight and bulky goods will be encouraged.

### Open Space, Leisure and Recreation

**OS6 – Metropolitan Open Land**

The Council designates Victoria Park, Mile End Park, Tower Hamlets Cemetery, The Lee Valley Regional Park, and Millwall Park/Mudchute/Island Gardens as Metropolitan Open Land. Within these areas, development will only be permitted for the following uses:

- Public and private open space and playing fields;
- Rivers, canals, reservoirs, lakes, docks and other open water;
- Allotments and nursery gardens;
- Cemetries and associated crematoriums;
- Nature conservation.

The following requirements will also apply:

1. New buildings must be ancillary to the main function as open land and sited as close as possible to existing buildings or on the periphery of the open land; and
2. New buildings should be to the highest standard of design and landscaping.

**OS7 – Loss of Open Space**

Planning permission will not normally be given for any development which results in the loss of public or private open space having significant recreation or amenity value except where such development is ancillary to and complements the outdoor recreational use or where the development is on a site laid out as temporary open space.

## SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE

### Planning Standard No. 8 – Canalside Development

#### The Towpath

The towpath will be opened to the public wherever possible. Where continuity of the path is broken, obstructions will be removed or an alternative route created;

Wherever possible, signposted access points will be incorporated into new development adjacent to the towpath, subject to the British Waterways Board agreement. This will assist in integrating the towpath with the local pedestrian network;

Some parts of the towpath may be suitable for inclusion in an advisory cycle network. This will be accepted where widths are sufficient to prevent conflict with other users and where the requisite permits have been obtained. Such a network should be drafted to acknowledge that the access points are closed between dusk and dawn;

Ramped access complying with the Council's standards for provision for people with disabilities should be provided at as many access points as possible;

The design, materials and detailing of towpath access points, surfacing, signposting, seats, lavatories, etc. should respect the established character of the canalside. Historic and traditional features and artefacts such as bollards and paddle gear should be retained or incorporated in new landscaping wherever possible.

### Conservation of Existing Character

Many existing buildings near the canals are substantial and of some architectural quality, and in places provide the distinctive sense of enclosure characteristic of Britain's urban canalside network. They should be retained and refurbished wherever possible. To this end, proposals that make good use of canalside buildings no longer required for their original purpose will be considered favourably, provided they do not impair local amenity. Where the canal adjoins the parkland areas, proposals will be expected to take into account the change from those parts of the canal where planting is largely present as a foil for built structures, to those parts where planting is already dominant;

Building materials used in canal walls, surfaces and adjoining buildings have become habitats for existing species. The use of traditional materials will therefore be encouraged for the maintenance of species as well as to preserve the character of the built environment.

### Nature Conservation

Many parts of the canalside including soft landscapes features are of significant ecological value. Proposals will be expected to retain and protect these areas from undue disturbance while leaving permanent access for the management;

The canals and their land margins are essentially wetland ecology. In order to retain its integrity and develop species richness, careful attention should be given to the species to be used in planting schemes. The Tower Hamlets Canal Project, published by the London Wildlife Trust, is an excellent guide to appropriate species for nature conservation. The BWB Waterway Environmental Handbook is a good general guide which will be of use for landscape proposals for development and parks;

Parts of the canals and the adjoining land margins will be managed as natural habitats where random colonisation will be permitted, or specific eco-systems will be created. The Council may seek land for the creation of maintenance of such reserves as a planning gain in association with developments.

### New Development

Most uses and types of activity are potentially suitable for the canalsides, provided that they do not impair local amenity and they comply with Plan policies. However, temporary uses adjacent to the canals will not usually be permitted, as such uses are generally unable to provide the level of investment necessary to sustain development of a sufficient standard;

Inherently, unattractive canalside uses such as car parking or certain sorts of open storage should be avoided wherever possible, or failing this be screened by a high fence and adequate planting, or by a high brick wall;

All development should take advantage of canalside locations in terms of outlook and orientation and should complement the canalside in terms of the aspect it presents to the canal;

Where the character of adjacent development suggests that it would be appropriate, new development should provide the sense of enclosure characteristic of much of the canalside. Elsewhere suitable landscaping and tree planting will be required as part of new development adjacent to the canal;

New development should, wherever possible, provide sitting-out areas, terraces, or gardens overlooking the canal;

The design of new development should provide for access for the maintenance of areas visible from the canal, the design of both hard and soft canalside landscaping should be durable, requiring the minimum maintenance and being vandal proof;

Where open space adjoins the canal, measures should be taken to ensure a good relationship between the open space and the canalside by keeping fencing to a minimum and by avoiding high embankments at the canal edge;

In order to ensure that neglected and unsightly strips of land neither remain nor are created between new developments and the canalside, development adjoining the canal will not be permitted unless the development site includes all land up to and including the canal bank or towpath. In order to eliminate areas of unmaintained land and create an integrated approach to the management of the canalside environment, management agreements may be required to ensure that parcels of potentially neglected land are treated in conjunction with adjoining development;

Wherever possible fencing should be avoided at or near the canal edge, but where it is considered necessary for safety purposes then a low (less than 1.375m, preferably about 0.9m high) vertical iron or mild steel railing is considered most appropriate in most circumstances, not only is this type of fencing visually desirable, but it also allows a rescuer to get to the canal edge should someone require help;

Proposals for launching facilities, moorings, marinas, and places of canalside entertainment such as restaurants, cafes, pubs and wine-bars will usually be welcomed. However, local amenity factors such as access considerations, vehicle and pedestrian flows, car parking and the like, as well as British Waterways Board operational limitations and requirements must also be taken into account in assessing the suitability of any applications;

The Council considers that advertisement hoardings are, by virtue of their scale and appearance, generally unsuited to a canalside setting. Accordingly, the Council will not usually give permission for the erection of new hoardings, which it may make use of its powers to secure the removal of advertisement displays where it considers them to impair local amenity. Provided they comply with Planning Guideline No.1., well-designed signs associated with canalside recreational and commercial entertainment facilities will, however, usually be permitted.

### Detailed Design Guidance

The Council will use the relevant design standards contained in the London Canals Committee Development Control Guidelines (January 1992) in assessing the suitability of any canalside development proposals. It will also take into account the British Waterways Board's Waterway Environmental Handbook 1972 (with amendments and additions), and the safety guidelines recommended by the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council (Report 96);

In order to pursue the Council's policy of canalside improvement, any of the following procedures may be followed:

- Conditions on planning permissions;
- Use of planning and other legal agreements;
- Enforcement procedure wherever a user has ignored or failed to meet the conditions of a permission;
- Negotiation with individual firms and landowners to encourage them to tidy up their sites;
- Where negotiation is unsuccessful, use of Section 65 of the 1971 Town & Country Planning Act to deal with unsightly sites.

### Liaison

In order to maintain and improve the quality of the canals and their environs in Tower Hamlets, the Council will continue to liase closely with British Waterways Board, the Lee Valley Regional Park Authority, the Thames Water Authority, the London Canals Committee and the Inland Waterways Amenity Advisory Council.

## BRITISH WATERWAYS

The study has been undertaken on behalf of British Waterways London to help the Waterway achieve its business aspirations for London's waterways.

The British Waterways – London Canals Business Plan 1999/00 – 2003/4 sets out the Vision and Strategy for London's waterways.

### The Vision

London Canals will become a flagship waterway and a major tourism and heritage attraction. Centres of vibrant activity contrast with areas of peace and tranquillity to create a rich and varied environment to be enjoyed.

A programme of economic and environmental regeneration and business development, harnessing key partnerships and funding, particularly London Waterway Partnership, will revitalise the waterway and raise its profile in the capital city.

### The Strategy

Strengthen the identity of the waterway unit as a flagship waterway.

Develop our business in the key areas of property and leisure to underpin our financial performance and sustain the business of the waterway.

Further our business relationships and partnerships to raise our profile thereby securing external funding and development opportunities.

Derive maximum benefit from London's Waterway Partnership to achieve the economic and environmental regeneration of the waterway corridor and expedite our development aspirations.

Develop the moorings business, providing quality new mooring sites to meet excess demand, revising our pricing policy and implementing a high standard of maintenance.

Implement a public relations and marketing strategy which promotes the canals as a 'must-see' tourism destination in conjunction with an events programme focusing on our role in 'London Millennium city'.

Improve availability and accessibility to a wider range of customer groups ensuring issues of public safety are fully addressed, and using this opportunity to improve the quality of the waterway environs.

Establish better community links through liaison and education initiatives to engage local people in the regeneration and environmental protection of their canals.

Improve the quality of the waterway environment and customer facilities in line with waterway standards that befit the capital city and which are consistent with the objectives of the Contract with Government.

Implement a customer services policy which instils a sense of pride and excellence in all staff.

Develop the staff team through training and empowerment to encourage greater understanding of all aspects of the waterway business.

Develop an Environmental Strategy and biodiversity Action Plan within the context of the Environmental Code of Practice.

Raise the profile of the waterway as a major heritage attraction, highlighting the rich and varied working waterway heritage as a resource to be explored.

## SUSTRANS

Sustrans is a civil engineering transport charity with the aim of promoting sustainable transport. Its practical contribution has been to design and build traffic-free paths for cyclists, walkers and disabled people, often on disused railways and canal towpaths. Partially funded by the Millennium Commission, and known as the Millennium Routes, Sustrans have developed a national cycle network.

Route 1 uses the strategic position of the Hertford Union Canal in relation to Mile End Park, the Regent's Canal, Victoria Park and the Lee Navigation. The Route follows the Regent's Canal towpath north, passes through Victoria Park and joins the towpath of the Hertford Union through a gate and ramp alongside the Top O' the Morning pub. The gate is presently kept locked by the licensee and liaison to resolve the matter is being undertaken. The route then continues along the towpath to the junction of the Hertford Union with the Lee Navigation, heading north up a ramp to White Post Lane, when the towpath changes sides.

## LOWER LEA PROJECT

The Lower Lea Project is a charity, aiming *to support sustainable development and management of the Lower Lea waterway environment for the benefit of those who wish to use the area, but without compromising the value of the area as a unique natural resource*.

The Project carries out direct waterway improvements, using staff and volunteers; it works proactively with statutory and public sector bodies involved in the waterway management process; it works with regeneration agents in the private sector and it develops community involvement and participation in the waterway, particularly through the use of the community boat, "Pride of Lee", supplied by the Lee Valley Regional Park. The Lower Lea Project uses the Hertford Union Canal as part of its circular trips on the waterways of East London, and moors below Bottom Lock to enable passengers to disembark before the journey through the locks.

The Lower Lea Project are also directly involved in ecological programmes on the Hertford Union, for instance the installation of reed beds close to a new development.

## LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK

The Lee Valley Regional Park was established in 1967 to regenerate 4000 hectares of land and water for leisure activities and nature conservation. The Park extends for about 37 kilometres from Ware in Hertfordshire to near the Thames in Tower Hamlets. The Lee Valley Regional Park Strategic Business Plan 2000-2010 sets out the *Access for All* objectives of the Authority. As the Hertford Union is a link to the LVRP, these strategies directly affect the canal.

### The Lee Valley Pathway

This will be a shared use path for walkers and cyclists, with good access for disabled people. Running the length of the Regional Park from Ware to the Thames, such is its strategic importance that it will form part of Route I of the National Cycle network promoted by Sustrans. It will provide recreation in its own right, sustainable access to all park facilities and link with other cycleways and paths to reach the length and breadth of the valley, as well as Inner London.

### The Lee Valley Line Project

This will facilitate access from all local public transport nodes (train and tube stations) between Bromley by Bow in east London and Ware in Hertfordshire (a 50 mile regional walking route from London to Luton following the River Lea). At the same time, access to the Regional Park's natural resource and leisure and recreation facilities will also be much enhanced. The project, initiated through the London Walking Forum's Life Project, is also part of the successful London's Waterway Partnership SRB

bid.

## Signage and Information

A major programme to improve directional highway signage to make it easier for visitors to get to and around the Regional Park is planned. On site signage and interpretation will also be enhanced to ensure visitors gain maximum value and enjoyment from their visits. In addition, modern information technology will be used to develop a network of interactive, touch screen kiosks, strategically located at key sites throughout the catchment area, to promote awareness and encourage usage of the Regional Park amongst its subscribers.

## VICTORIA PARK

Victoria Park has been designated in the Tower Hamlets Adopted Unitary Development Plan (1998) as Metropolitan Open Land. Victoria Park is the world's oldest municipal park and was laid out between 1842 and 1845 to the design of James Pennethorne, a protege of John Nash. It is the major open space resource in Tower Hamlets. In recognition of its London-wide significance, the Council is currently developing a major restoration plan to restore the park to its former Victorian character. Under consideration is the extension of the deer enclosure and the provision of additional and improved signage and interpretation facilities, to ensure that visitors are fully aware of all the park has to offer.

The Park Manager reports that the park is very busy at weekends during summer. The park facilities include well used football pitches (fully booked during the season), tennis courts and a bowling green, although most use is passive, particularly dog walking. Evening events, including firework concerts, are well attended, 'Tree Walks' have been organised and in autumn there are bulb planting activities with local schools. A user survey is being undertaken , with results expected at the end of summer 2001. The Park Manager agrees that Victoria Park and the Hertford Union Canal tend to be used 'in parallel', rather than as adjacent and interactive leisure resources.

## MILE END PARK

The Tower Hamlets UDP 1998 designates Mile End Park as Metropolitan Open Land, and goes on to state that the creation of a park of metropolitan significance along the Grand Union Canal is a long standing proposal, originating in 1943 as a proposal for a linear park alongside the Regent's Canal, connecting Victoria Park to the Thames at Limehouse.

This has been partly realised but the Council acknowledges that its completion in line with the plans of the 1940's is now unrealistic. The Council recognises the contribution that a large park could make to the recreational needs of this part of London and has detailed programmes to bring about significant improvements to Mile End Park. Recent improvements in addition to the existing sports stadium and climbing wall include an ecology park with a lake, terraced gardens and a children's adventure playground. The original designation is now being reassessed in the light of present circumstances and its boundaries are being reappraised, to ensure that the full range of functions of Metropolitan Open land are met in Tower Hamlets. The Council therefore intend that Mile End Park should have different functions to Victoria Park and Lee Valley Regional Park if it is to be of genuine metropolitan significance. The Council considers these functions to be:

- To provide a series of significant parks, along the major recreation corridor of the canal system linking in with Victoria Park and the Lee Valley Regional Park to the north and the Thames to the south;

- To provide major sports facilities at Mile End stadium; and
- To provide a major ecological corridor linking areas of ecological significance.

The Council has identified the main additional needs are to maintain links with the canal system and to establish and maintain links with areas of metropolitan significance for nature conservation, for instance Tower Hamlets Cemetery.

The sites to the south of Mile End Park do not abut the Regent's Canal and are not sites of significance for nature conservation, the Council therefore regards them as surplus to the requirements of the park.

To the north, the Hertford Union Canal separates Victoria Park and Mile End Park. This northern most area of Mile End Park along the Hertford Union Canal had its designation as Metropolitan Open Land deleted, which allowed the development of Bow Wharf. The original proposal of a marina, arts centre and housing (which was intended to complement the attractions of the parks and the canals), has been replaced by a bar/restaurant/retail units scheme, which now precludes any visual links between the parks.

## THE LONDON WALKING FORUM

The London Walking Forum was formed in 1990 and is an organisation with an objective to establish a London-wide network of waymarked walks, linking open spaces, Green Chains and the wider countryside. It also aims to promote walking by all members of the community, including black and ethnic minority groups and women. The Forum are currently undertaking a survey on behalf of the Greater London Authority.

## DISUSED NORTH LONDON RAILWAY

A stretch of disused railway crosses the Hertford Union close to Wick Lane. The site is owned by the Docklands Light Railway and its future is not certain, although it has been proposed as part of a cycle route.

## FISH ISLAND

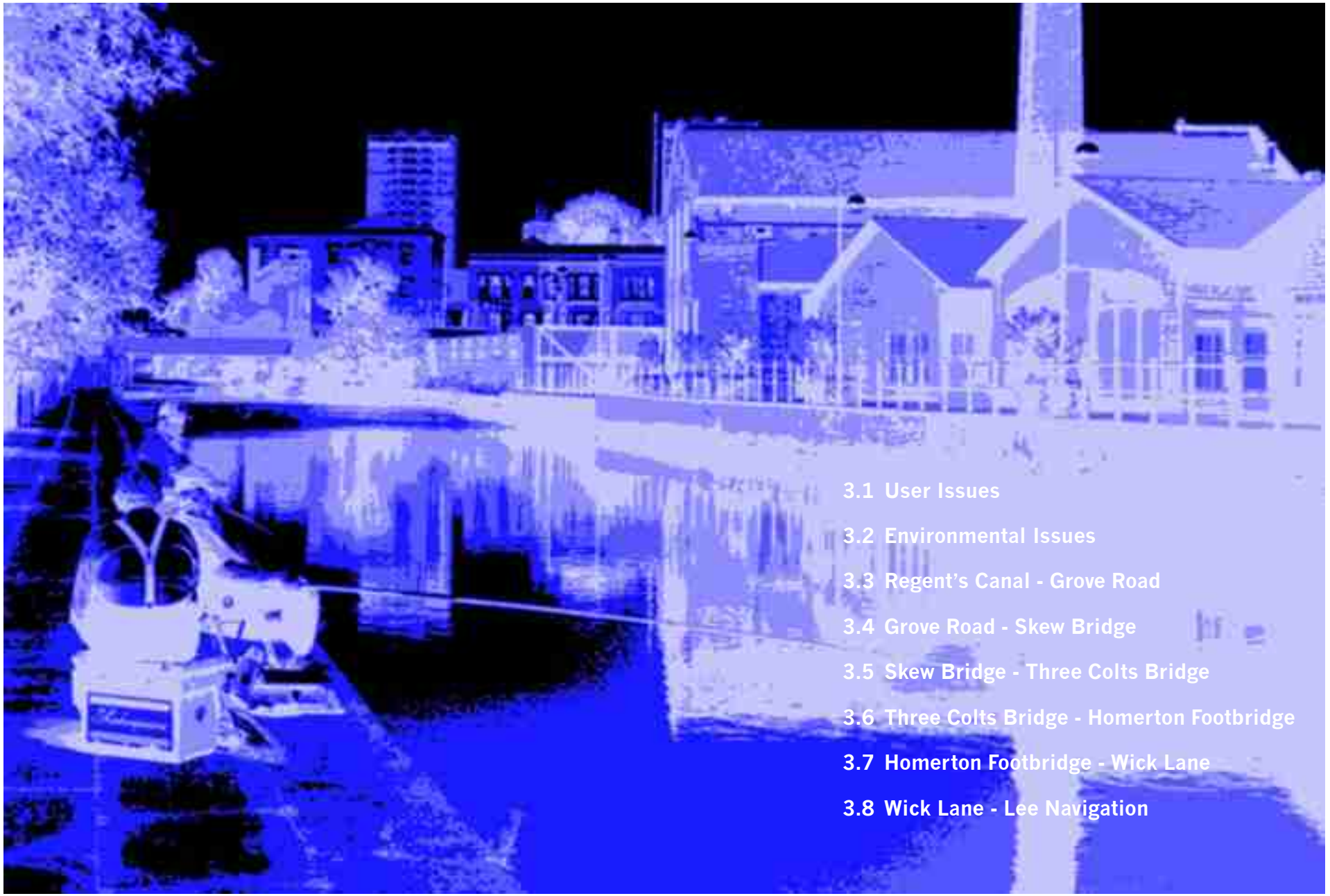
The land bordered by the Hertford Union Canal, the Lee Navigation and Wick Lane is known as 'Fish Island' and is presently being evaluated for possible redevelopment.

## METROPOLITAN POLICE

The Crime Prevention Design Advisor for the Metropolitan Police is to survey the Hertford Union Canal in order to produce a report on specific crime prevention measures along the waterway. This will complement the existing report *"Regent's Canal: Suggested Crime Prevention Improvements"*, which set out to identify:

- The nature of criminal activity along the waterway;
- The causes of crime and the fear of crime;
- The most effective and appropriate means of dealing with crime prevention in new and existing developments, given the unique and historic context of the canal corridor.

The recommendations of the report will be incorporated into this Action Plan.



3.1 User Issues

3.2 Environmental Issues

3.3 Regent's Canal - Grove Road

3.4 Grove Road - Skew Bridge

3.5 Skew Bridge - Three Colts Bridge

3.6 Three Colts Bridge - Homerton Footbridge

3.7 Homerton Footbridge - Wick Lane

3.8 Wick Lane - Lee Navigation

# 3 ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## Background

Consultation taken from the 'Regent's Canal Action Plan' with communities living close to the Regent's Canal revealed that there are three main user issues for those living near to London's canals:

- Improving access to the towpath for all members of the community, including people with disabilities;
- Community safety and reducing the fear of crime;
- Enhancing the visitor experience.

The three sets of issues are interlinked so that an improvement of one set of issues can bring about benefits in other areas. For example improving access to enable more people to use the towpath may indirectly improve the feeling of security simply by having more people around.

The following section is sub-divided into the above three user issues. Under these headings the particular issues relating to the Hertford Union Canal are outlined, with any improvements being included in the Analysis and Recommendation Plans which follow this section.

Access For All

## Improving Access to the Towpath for All Members of the Community, Including People with Disabilities

The potential for accessing the canal corridor is central to its use. Poor access provision reduces the scope for attracting different users, and can alienate the canal environment from its surroundings. Access provision should be frequent, and safe, and wherever possible, encourage use by all sectors of the community to ensure social inclusion for the less able-bodied, women, families with pushchairs and minority groups. The proximity of residential areas, local schools and work places or safe car parking is often a determining factor in the level of use of an access point or a particular stretch of canal. The only car park close to the Hertford Union Canal is at Bow Wharf.

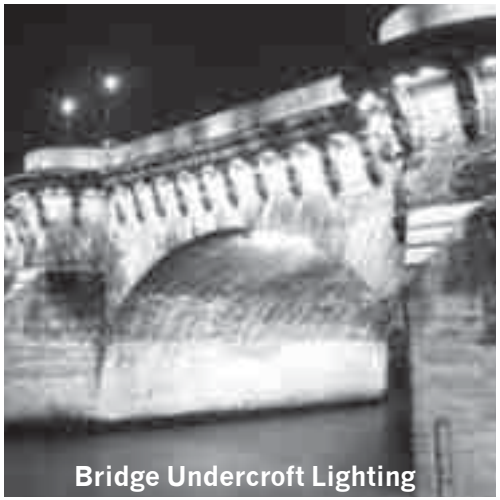
The principle of providing a safe, well-defined access for all users is a requirement for all service providers, including British Waterways, under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. In response to recognition that British Waterways needs to respond in a co-ordinated way to its responsibilities under the DDA, and also that there are very specific issues and constraints relating to the historic environment of the waterway, British Waterways has worked with the Fieldfare Trust to produce 'Waterway Access For All - Policy and Design Guidance' to direct design proposals, specifically in the context of the waterway environment. The 'Waterway Access For All' project covers the needs of people with all types of disability, including people with hearing, sight and learning difficulties, as well as those with mobility disabilities.

In this case, a specific access audit has not been undertaken by the FieldFare Trust. However, the same basic principles have been used to assess access on the Hertford Union Canal, with many similar outcomes. Some key findings are:

- The paved towpath is generally in good condition, being largely concrete slabs with power cable trunking below.
- Short, but often very steep gradients punctuate the route, particularly at access points to the highway and in the vicinity of locks.
- Traditional brick built bridges, and some newer ones, restrict the clear walking tunnel required by those with visual impairment, create hidden corners that increase fear of crime, and create pinch points leading to conflict between users.
- There is a lack of opportunities for resting or sitting along the canal, a requirement of the elderly or infirm.
- There is no access at all from Grove Road and Old Ford Road reducing the usefulness of the towpath as a local route, and leaving a long stretch without a possible 'escape route' to help the perception of personal safety.
- Victoria Park is a major recreation facility in East London, but there is no access directly between the park and the Hertford Union Canal, despite having a long common boundary. As a result, people tend to use either the park or the canal for their route.
- Only two of the current access points to the canal (ramps at Three Colts Bridge and Homerton Footbridge) come close to meeting the appropriate standard.
- Access to the towpath from Wick Lane is prevented by the locked gates at Mitford Bridge.

Access to the canal corridor is also affected by linkages created with other routes, with different means of transport and by the linkages between residential areas, schools, shopping areas, recreational facilities, town centres and workplaces. Linkages with road routes are often dependent on parking facilities near to the access point or on the provision of public transport. Key linkages along the Hertford Union canal include the Regent's Canal, the River Lee Navigation (Lee Valley Regional Park), Bow Wharf (Mile End Park), Victoria Park and Sustrans Millennium Route 1.

The value of access points and linkages, along and in and out of the canal corridor, is greatly improved by clear directional signage and information. Many linking routes and destinations are not clearly sign posted and users can be left unaware of the potential routes available. A co-ordinated signage strategy would complement improved access points and linkages, and improve awareness, reassure users and assist optimum integration of resources.



Bridge Undercroft Lighting

## Community Safety and Reducing the Fear of Crime

To be safe and secure is a fundamental expectation. All members of the community have a right to reasonable safety.

- More clearly defined location points;
- Increased and better signposting;
- Encouragement of greater activity on the canalside;
- Removing the drinkers and drug dealers;
- Better lighting of the canal;
- Increased and better access onto the canal towpath.

Crime and anti-social behaviour is an unavoidable feature of our society, however it is one that can to the greater part be controlled. The waterways through their nature and usage present opportunities for crime to happen, not only to the detriment of the waterway users but also the surrounding land users and local community in general. The overriding theme in order to design out crime is the need for early consultation and the inclusion of design measures at the planning stage as part of an integral approach to new development and improvement schemes, rather than ad hoc measures being implemented once a development has been completed.

As a result of the above, British Waterways has, in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police, produced the document '*Under Lock and Quay: A Guide to Waterside Development and Improvement in London*'. This document provides guidance on the most appropriate and effective ways of designing out opportunities for criminal activity and reducing fear of crime in existing and new developments adjoining urban waterways.

Community awareness and participation is also a valuable and powerful tool in tackling crime in the community. The aim of community involvement is to instil a sense of ownership and pride in a site and hopefully to suppress the desire by members of the community to wilfully damage or destroy the waterway environment.

The Park Manager of the adjacent Victoria Park advises that although there is considerable vandalism in the Park (a daily occurrence), there is surprisingly little crime against the person, with only two muggings reported in the year 2000.

Improving access to the towpath for all members of the community is a particularly effective way of reducing crime and the fear of crime, by encouraging use and so increasing informal surveillance. Access to the Hertford Union Canal towpath is relatively poor, with no access from Grove Road Bridge, Skew Bridge and restricted access at present from Wick Lane. Although there are clear views of the towpath from Victoria Park, and there is access to the Park via ramps at Gunmakers Lane and at Parnell Road, there is no direct access to the Park from the towpath. Gates formerly giving access to the towpath near to Skew Bridge have been bolted shut. Reopening these gates and creating a new gateway between Three Colts Bridge and Homerton Footbridge could encourage greater use of the towpath and improve interaction between the park and the towpath. These gates would need to be locked from dusk to dawn, in accordance with Victoria Park's security policy. New stepped access is also possible from Old Ford Road.

# 3 ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## Enhancing the Visitor Experience

### Walking

The towpath of the Hertford Union Canal can already be seen as a strategic east-west footpath, linking the Regent's Canal and the River Lee Navigation, but local people do not appear to use the towpath as part of north-south routes (for instance to reach the famous Roman Road Street market). The access issues must be addressed to make this a more useful local traffic-free route.

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets has designated the towpath as part of the Green Chain, supported by the following measures in the UDP:

- DEV 63 states that' within these areas, improved access including links with adjacent pedestrian routes, enhancement of their recreational potential…….will be sought';
- DEV 65 seeks to 'protect existing walkways from development which would prevent free public access and/or harm their character';
- DEV 66 states that the Council 'will specify and develop a network of pedestrian footpaths, based on the Green Chains and the Strategic Riverside Walkway in conjunction with adjoining boroughs and LAPC';
- T20 asserts that the Council will 'support the improvement of pedestrian facilities along the Canal …… in collaboration with adjoining Boroughs and the Lee Valley Regional Park to form a strategic pedestrian route network'.

The London Ecology Unit has developed two circular walks that include the towpath of the Hertford Union. Walk One (5.7 km) includes Victoria Park, the Regent's Canal and the Hertford Union Canal. Walk Two (8.4 km) includes the Lee Navigation, the Greenway (the Northern Outfall Sewer Pathway), the Old River Lea, the Hertford Union Canal, the Regent's Canal, Mile End Park and Tower Hamlets Cemetery Park.

The Bow Heritage Trail crosses the Hertford Union Canal at Wick Lane, but does not point out the heritage and significance of the canal.

The London Walking Forum are working on developing circular routes in London, but these do not include the Hertford Union Canal.

Jogger in Victoria Park

### Boating

The Hertford Union Canal forms part of a short circular route for boats, linking the Regent's Canal with the River Lee Navigation and returning to Limehouse Basin via Limehouse Cut. This route through East London is popular for boat trips and for short cruises.

The "Pride of Lee" is a community cruise boat operated by a charity, the Lower Lee Project, and manned by volunteers, offering trips to community groups, schools and the public. The "Pride of Lee" usually moors at the eastern end of the Hertford Union, with passengers often disembarking and walking along the towpath of the Hertford Union, watching the boat pass through the locks. The Lower Lee Project have identified the need for a paved area alongside the mooring point, to assist passengers as they disembark.

All moorings on the Hertford Union are short term, associated with the locks, although there are plans to introduce a 'Stop & Shop' mooring (3 to 4 mooring rings and information signage) below Middle Lock for boaters to obtain groceries from Parnell Road. There are End of Garden moorings at the rear of properties on Chisenhale Road, but currently no boats are associated with it. As the Hertford Union is a short, narrow canal it is unlikely that long term moorings could be established, but there is potential for business and retail moorings at Bow Wharf, trip boat stops and possibly boat hire associated with Victoria Park.

## Cycling

On the grounds of sustainability the use of canals as a cycling route should be encouraged, but of the behaviour of a small proportion of cyclists can provoke antagonism amongst pedestrians.

In common with the Regent's Canal, non-recreational cycling is not promoted along the Hertford Union Canal because of the bridges with low headroom, steep towpath descent alongside the locks, narrow towpath in places and the number of other towpath users. Cyclists do use this stretch of canal in considerable numbers, many as part of commuter routes, so there tend to be peak times. Unfortunately, the canal environment creates user conflicts; primarily between pedestrians and cyclists.

No British Waterways towpaths are dedicated cycleways, but where cycling is allowed, the route is promoted as a shared use path. In urban areas, this usually involves providing a paved towpath 2 metres wide, so a feasibility study is necessary to assess the impact on the historic environment, landscape and biodiversity of the waterway, as well as on other towpath users. The stretch of Hertford Union towpath that forms part of Sustrans Millennium Route 1 (from Wick Lane to Carpenters Road) will need to be resurfaced to a width of 2 metres in order to meet the criteria of a shared use path.

## Angling

Nationally, the sport of angling is undergoing a period of change. Over the last few years, the number of anglers (based on the sale of rod licences) has remained more or less stable, but most angling clubs have reported falling membership levels. There has also been a noticeable decline in the number of anglers using canals and rivers, but a dramatic increase in the usage of intensively managed commercial fisheries, where very high fish stocks guarantee good sport, and there are facilities like car parking, toilets, cafes and tackle shops.

Anglers Opposite Bow Wharf

The issues relating to angling on the Hertford Union Canal are comparable with those on other urban canals:

- A lack of parking facilities close to access points, in view of the amount of equipment used by anglers (there are no car parks adjacent to the Hertford Union);
- The perceived level of conflict between anglers and other towpath users;
- Fish thefts reduce fish stocks;
- Anti-social behaviour and a fear of crime on the towpath;
- Fouling of the towpath by dogs.

The local licence is held by the London Anglers Club, with occasional competitions being held. It is considered a good stretch for urban fishing but there is a lack of habitat for the fish.

Zander are an introduced predatory species of fish that feeds on fish fry, damaging fish stocks, but they are not considered to be a problem on the Hertford Union Canal.

## ECOLOGY

The entire London canal network, including the Hertford Union Canal, has been designated a Site of Metropolitan Importance for nature conservation as a result of its intrinsic value for wildlife and because it provides public access to nature; the latter is particularly important where canals pass through the inner city boroughs, like Tower Hamlets.

Victoria Park is bounded on two sides by the Regent's and Hertford Union canals and is a site of Borough Importance. Two ornamental lakes have coot, swans, great crested grebe, pochard, Canada geese, tufted duck, moorhen. The park is also an important site for bats, with pipistrelles and noctules both feeding there.

The park is very valuable, not only on an individual basis, but because it widens the canal wildlife corridor. The canal provides a link between pockets of ecological interest and open spaces.

Victoria Park

## Biodiversity initiatives relevant to the Hertford Union Canal

### The London Biodiversity Action Plan

The London Biodiversity Audit, launched in January 2000, highlights canals as one of 15 habitats in London that form London's biodiversity resource. It highlights the canals, including the Hertford Union, as providing a network of linear wetlands that support a wide range of wetland communities and species.

British Waterways are committed to preparing the Canal Habitat Action Plan for the London Biodiversity Action Plan.

### Local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs)

Tower Hamlets are going to produce a local biodiversity plan in the future.

## Overview of the ecology of the Hertford Union Canal

### Habitats

#### Channel

Most of the canal does not support extensive areas of aquatic or emergent vegetation. However a wide variety of plants do occur where the conditions are favourable, including several species of pondweed e.g. fennel-leaved, curled pondweeds and broad-leaved pondweed, along with Nuttall's waterweed and soft hornwort, which is rare in London. Other aquatic plants found include arrowhead, rigid hornwort, yellow water-lily, broad-leaved pondweed, spiked water-milfoil, water forget-me-not and fat and greater duckweeds.

The Environment Agency does not routinely monitor the water quality of the Hertford Union and so the extents of any problems are not quantifiable. However low flow rates and the less than satisfactory water quality of the Regents Canal, from which the Hertford Union receives its water supply, could suggest water quality that could be improved.

#### Channel margins

The canal banks are vertical and comprised of brick, stone, concrete or sheet piles. This is poor habitat for aquatic and emergent vegetation. However in some small sections, predominately at the eastern end, emergent vegetation does occur.

Sweet-flag, garden angelica, marsh woundwort, water dock and branched bur-reed are marginal plant species that have been recorded along the edges of the canal in Tower Hamlets. Reed sweet-grass, gypsywort, celery-leaved buttercup, hemlock water-dropwort, common skullcap, reed canary-grass, trifid bur-marigold, redshank, yellow iris, water-cress and fool's water cress are some of the more common wetland plants to be seen.

#### Towpath and towpath verges (bank verge & boundary verge)

The verges vary in width and floristic diversity along the canal's length. They support a range of mostly common grassland and ruderal plants including a high proportion of non-natives. Yarrow, ribwort, greater plantains, bent grass, wall barley, clovers and trefoils, are especially common on the canal verge. Taller common species here or on the towpath verge include mugwort, the fleabanes, common mallow, nettle, creeping thistle, black horehound and bristly oxtongue.

**Boundary**

Victoria Park dominates the boundary. Planted trees, including sycamores, poplars, oak and willow sp., are found all along the section. Unfortunately a fence separates the park from the towpath and one can only move between the park and the canal at a couple of bridges.

At the eastern and western ends of the canal the boundary consists of, either walls or housing, with occasional vegetation.

**Offside and adjacent land**

Despite the Hertford Union Canal being an urban canal, especially where the canal joins the Lee Navigation & the Regents Canal, the presence of Victoria Park gives a tranquil feel, whilst providing an important extension to the 'green' corridor.

Victoria Park does not currently have a biodiversity action plan or strategy. Partnership between managers of Victoria Park and the canal should be encouraged in order to increase biodiversity in the area and increase awareness of biodiversity amongst the local community.

## Species

**Birds**

The waterway and adjoining land provide suitable habitats for many bird species, both migrant and breeding. Species commonly seen on the canal include coot, moorhen, mallard, grey heron, mute swans and Canada geese.

Victoria Park's ornamental ponds are used by many birds, especially wildfowl. Tufted duck, pochard, Canada geese, mute swans, mallards, coot and moorhen can all be seen, and great crested grebe are known to have bred here. The wooded/scrubby sections of the park and canal corridor also support birds such as wren, blackcap, dunnock, robin, blue tit, blackbird, starling, jay, wood pigeon and magpie.

Cormorants, black-headed gulls, common terns, housemartins, swallows and swifts have also been recorded along the canal.

**Damselflies & Dragonflies**

The canal system provides an important habitat for damselflies & dragonflies in London. Common blue and blue-tailed damselflies and brown hawker dragonfly have been recorded along the Hertford Union. The most important section is at the eastern end where the canal joins the Lee Navigation. Here the good aquatic and emergent vegetation provide an important habitat for damselflies & dragonflies.

**Fish**

Roach, bream, perch, carp, tench, eels, gudgeon, ruffe, pike and occasional chub and dace have all been recorded in the Regent's Canal and are therefore also likely to occur in the Hertford Union.

**Aliens**

There are several species of alien plants known to be growing, or have grown, along the length of the Hertford Union Canal. For example, large-flowered waterweed, an introduced South American species, was discovered near Bottom Lock in 1993 by the London Natural History Society and is the first record for London. California brome, thorn-apple and cultivated flax are other unusual alien plants found along the canals in Tower Hamlets.

Alien animals include red-eared terrapins and Turkish crayfish.

## Strategic Aims

The London canal network, including the Hertford Union, brings linear wetlands into the heart of inner city London, creating an important wildlife resource within an otherwise urban area. Furthermore, this proximity to London's human population creates a unique opportunity to provide public access to wildlife.

The Hertford Union is also recognised as an important habitat within the borough of Tower Hamlets, supporting a surprising number of plants and animals, some of them very rare in inner London. Great potential exists to enhance biodiversity, as well as increasing public awareness and local community involvement in the canal's future.

The following strategic aims are suggestions to ensure the protection, enhancement and appropriate management of the canal for the benefit of biodiversity and the people who visit the canal for its wealth as a 'green lung':

- ensure that regeneration/redevelopment of the canal corridor does not result in the loss of habitats or species;
- ensure any increase or change in recreational use does not adversely affect the canal's biodiversity;
- use the British Waterways Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), London BAP and local BAPs to guide biodiversity initiatives on the Hertford Union and influence all projects on the canal, from regeneration schemes to day to day management;

- ensure the involvement of wildlife groups and key users such as walkers, anglers and boaters in partnerships and schemes in order to increase awareness of biodiversity issues;
- undertake further ecological survey work to update our knowledge of the biodiversity along the canal;
- encourage the local community and schools to become involved in ecological activities along the canal e.g. community planting projects and educational packs such as Waterways Challenge;
- create a partnership with Victoria Park management in order enhance the biodiversity along the canal corridor and the adjacent park, and to exchange ideas and skills on urban conservation;
- ensure that environmental protection remains a central theme of the London's Waterway Partnership initiative.

Offside Emergent Vegetation

## Ecological Assessment of proposed development/regeneration project site

(Grid Reference: TQ 369 841)

### Introduction

There is a proposal to create a garden/nursery area on a small strip of land adjacent to the towpath of the Hertford Union Canal. Part of the site has also been identified by BW as a site for suitable for future development. This report forms an environmental appraisal of the site in question, assessing the significance of both the landscape and ecological value of the site.

### Site Description and Ecological Details

The site in question is directly adjacent to the towpath of the Hertford Union Canal

(TQ 369 841). It comprises of a narrow strip of land between Cadogan Terrace

Bridge and Parnell Road Bridge. Around half the strip backs directly on to Victoria Park.

Both the Hertford Union Canal and Victoria Park are designated as Sites of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation. These sites are considered to be the best examples of London's wildlife habitats and often are of particular significance within large areas of otherwise heavily built up areas of London.

The strip can be divided into three sections:

The first section (nearest Cadogan Terrace Bridge) is surrounded on three sides by a wooden fence and borders the car park opposite the "Top of the Morning Pub". This area was a some stage covered in concrete and has the lowest ecological interest. The site has been colonised by grasses and weeds. A few self-seeded buddleia bushes are present. A small amount of bramble is also present. Three young sycamore saplings are also growing in this area. The strip is widest in this area (approximately 8 metres wide). Several well established sycamores occur adjacent to, but just outside of the fenced area on the canal towpath.

The second central section. The north boundary of this section is flanked by the parks maintenance depot. The strip narrows in this section (approximately 4m wide). The main feature of interest in this section is the line of established sycamores which flank the towpath and canal, growing at the top of the embankment wall. Other species present in this section include elder and holly. Unfortunately this section has been used in the past to dump rubbish (e.g. rusting metal containers, old pipes, traffic cones). The trees help screen the view of the depot for the houses on the offside bank and contribute to the landscape character along this stretch of the canal by providing an almost continuous line of trees between the two bridges.

The third section described runs from the area adjacent to the edge of the council depot to the Parnell Road Bridge. This part of the strip is also narrow (approx. 4m wide). This section has the greatest ecological value. It provides a line of well established trees which flank the towpath and canal, growing along the top of the towpath wall. Most of the trees are apparently self-seeded sycamores, but there is also birch present along the wall. There has been no dumping in this section although a small amount of litter is present. This section contains a large number of saplings in addition to the established trees flanking the towpath. These are mainly sycamore but oak, birch, holly and elder are also present. This section

provides an inaccessible and largely undisturbed area which is likely to be of value to breeding birds, it visually enhances the appearance of this stretch of the canal and provides a continuous link of habitat with the mature plane trees of Victoria Park.

### Conclusions and Recommendations

The wooded part of the strip is of both ecological and visual/landscape value to this stretch of the canal. It provides an area of relatively undisturbed and inaccessible habitat in a part of London where such features are rather limited in extent. It also provides a very attractive landscape feature where the established sycamore trees flank the canal. The trees are also beneficial for the residents who live on the offside bank as they provide a screen for the parks maintenance depot.

The first section is of limited ecological value. Generally it does not contribute much to the landscape of this stretch although the established sycamores on the towpath should be retained as they help maintain the tree lined continuity of the towpath.

Since both the Hertford Union Canal and Victoria Park are both designated as Sites of Metropolitan Importance for Nature Conservation the removal of areas of habitat within these sites is not recommended.

The central section of the canal could be improved by removal of the rubbish which has accumulated over time. It may also be beneficial to carry out some supplementary planting and to consider installing bat and bird boxes on suitable trees.

## LANDSCAPE

Landscape (hard and soft) enhancements appropriate to the Hertford Union Canal will need to be sensitively handled to conserve the local landscape character, particularly the boundary with Victoria Park and the links with the Regent's Canal & the River Lee Navigation.

Landscape enhancements are often the target of vandalism and theft, but incorporating local ideas, plans and aspirations and the involvement of local communities can reduce these effects, and create an opportunity for increased awareness of the canal.

The management of the canal environment is set out in the British Waterways 'Waterway Maintenance Specifications' which includes guidelines for grass cutting and enhancement, litter collection, hedge and scrub management, established tree management and reed bed/aquatic vegetation management. For full details on any management issues please contact British Waterways, London Office.

Public Art can contribute to the visual enhancement of the waterway and create a sense of place as well as a unique identity. The contribution of public art to a project may be expressed in a variety of ways, e.g. directional signs and interpretation panels, waterside furniture, fencing and boundaries and gateway/ landmark features, and will help to introduce character, local distinctiveness and interest into conventional and functional elements. Past experience has demonstrated that the key to the most effective public art comes from the early involvement of the artist and the local community, as this can aid the adoption of the development or improvement within the area.

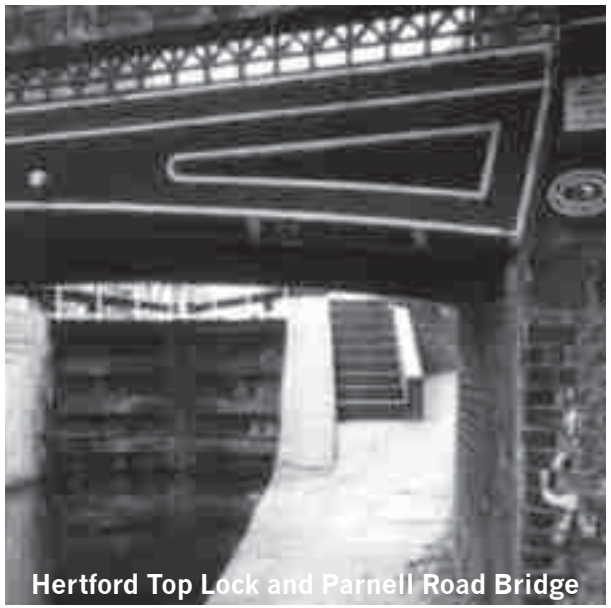
## HERITAGE

Three Colts Bridge is a cast iron accommodation bridge, Grade II* listed and a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

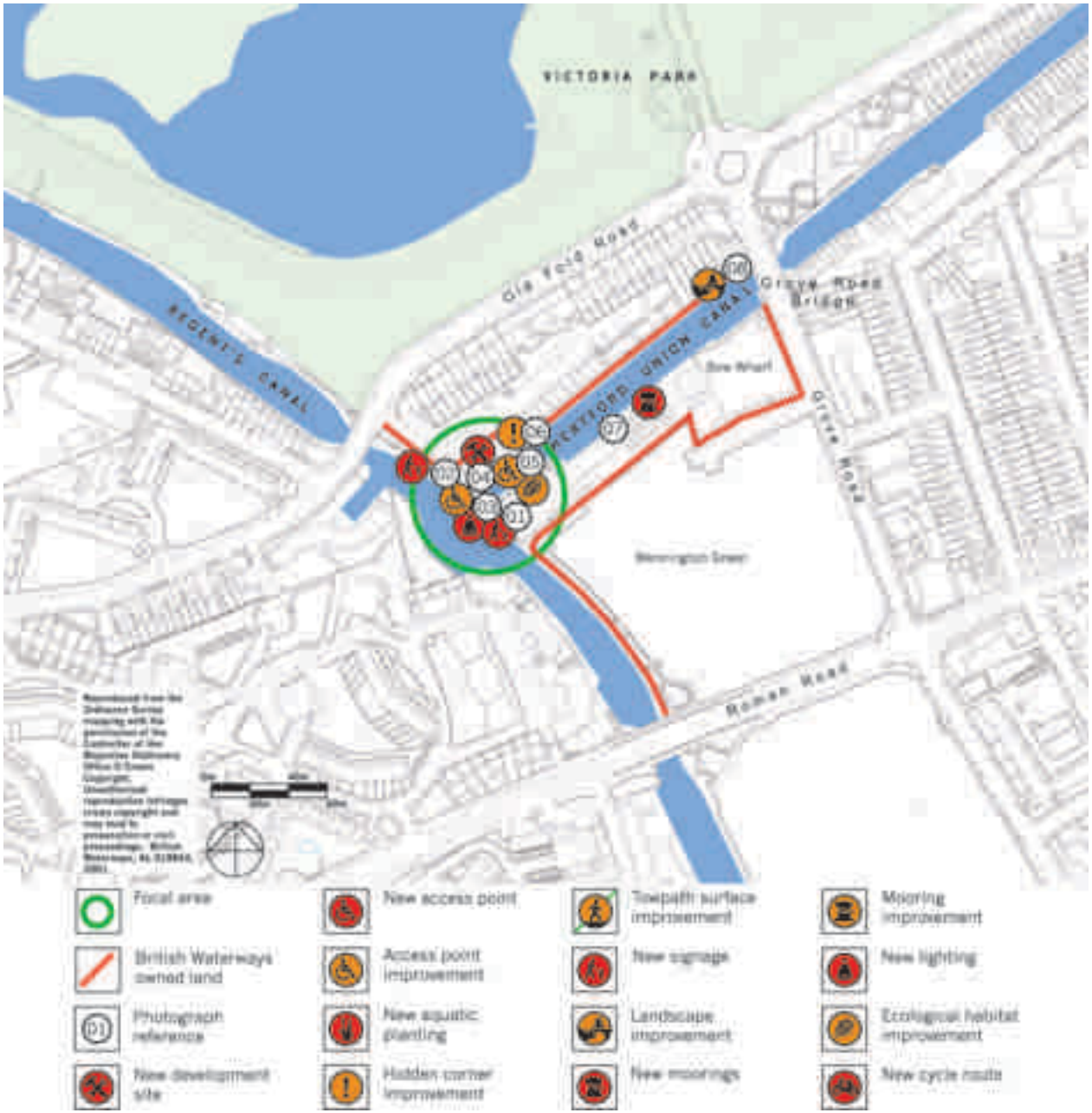
Top Lock is Grade II listed.

No.3 Lock Cottages is Grade II listed.

Parnell Road Bridge is a cast iron bridge, Grade II* listed and a Scheduled Ancient Monument.



Hertford Top Lock and Parnell Road Bridge



**1.** The junction of the Regent's Canal and the Hertford Union Canal is poorly defined. This area should be highlighted by new signage and interpretation to create a new focal point, and to emphasise the strategic routes, links and recreation opportunities available to users of the Hertford Union (including the links to Bow Wharf and Mile End Park). This should also include underbridge lighting of the towpath bridge.

**5.** The redevelopment of the warehouse site should be an opportunity to open up this relatively narrow stretch of the canal corridor, and create a more positive initial access from the Regent's Canal. The offside vegetation should be retained and enhanced if possible.

**2.** The derelict warehouse units create a barrier to arrival at the Hertford Union. Redevelopment of this site should include regrading and resurfacing the entire focal area, the access improvements described in 3. & 4., as well as opening up the canal corridor.

**3.** The access ramp is steeper than 'Access for All' recommendations and the band of granite setts at the top of the ramp makes wheelchair, pushchair and cycle access difficult. A new ramp should be integrated into the redevelopment of the warehouses. The blind corner should also be addressed. Improved signage and interpretation at this point would encourage use of the towpath.

**4.** The access ramp should be regraded, resurfaced and a handrail provided to meet 'Access for All' recommendations. The motorcycle barrier alongside the warehouse units impedes wheelchairs / pushchairs etc, and should be replaced with one in accordance with 'Access For All' standards. Preferably it should be of a round tubular steel construction to complement the traditional design of the waterway railings.

**6.** Redevelopment of the warehouse site should ensure that the blind corner is removed.

**7.** The new development at Bow Wharf has potential for visitor moorings on this relatively wide stretch of the canal, subject to discussion with local residents.

**8.** A recent residential development adjacent to Grove Road Bridge might have been used to design out the hidden corner on the west side of the bridge. Any future opportunity to amend this should be taken.

**9.** The towpath under Grove Road Bridge is relatively wide. The opportunity should be taken to lay an integrated hard surfacing scheme to the towpath beneath the bridge. Lighting could be installed under the bridge to help improve perceptions of safety at night, particularly if new access is created from Grove Road.

**13.** Emergent vegetation should be introduced at intervals along the offside edge (embayments / wides). This would have a positive 'knock-on' effect in providing a suitable habitat for damselflies & dragonflies, amphibians and waterbirds.

**10.** To increase pedestrian usage of the towpath, stepped access could only be created from the east side of Grove Road. This would link the towpath to Bow Wharf, Mile End Park and Vicroria Park. The growth of Japanese Knotweed needs to be monitored and controled along the towpath, following the appropriate Environment Agency guidelines. The blind corner needs to be designed out.

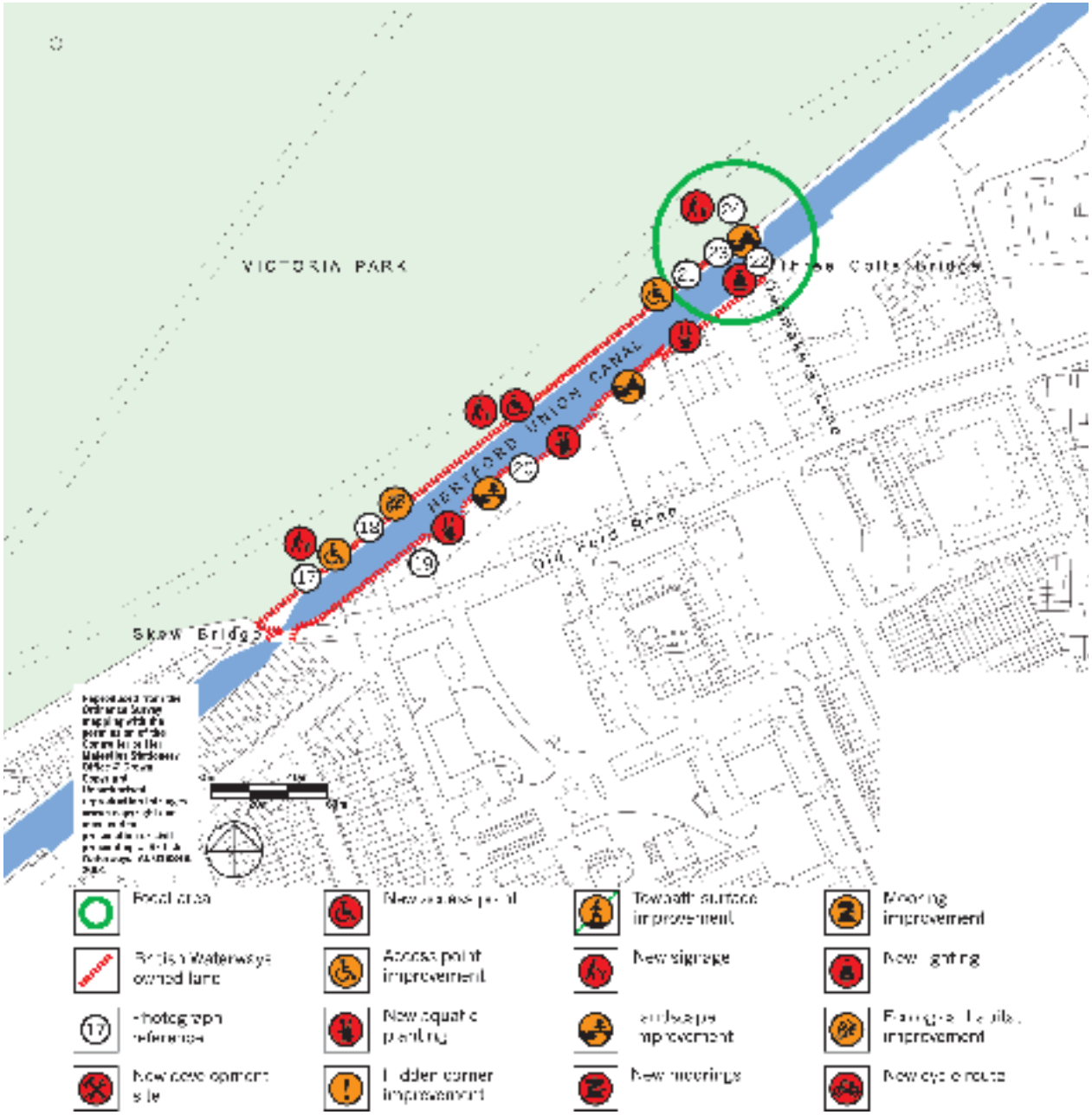
**11.** Private gated access to the towpath could be created for the residents of Lakeview.

**12.** The retaining wall at the rear of Lakeview is in poor condition. Repairs have been carried out in the past, but tree roots are causing damage. The trees need to be accommodated in rebuilding the wall, with co-operation between the land owner and British Waterways.

**14.** The offside industrial warehouse is a prime site for a waterside development. Residential, leisure and business would all be valid uses. There is ample room for visitor moorings to be part of the development.

**15.** Efforts should be made to increase the biodiversity of the towpath verges (especially the boundary verge) by reviewing the grass cutting regime and adopting a method to enhance floristic diversity.

**16.** This is the only stretch of the Hertford Union Canal with 'end of garden' moorings. The facility could be encouraged to develop boating on the waterway and provide visual interest for towpath users.



**17.** There are no routes directly from the towpath to Victoria Park. Although there are excellent views through the railings, the two important recreation facilities are kept separate. Access directly from Victoria Park to the towpath could be reinstated by creating a new pathway and opening up the existing gates, enabling interaction between the two spaces and encouraging park users to use the towpath as part as their route and vice versa. The gates would be locked at night, in accordance with the security policy of Victoria Park.

**21.** The motorcycle barrier to the west of Three Colts Bridge impedes wheelchairs / pushchairs etc, and should be replaced with one in accordance with 'Access For All' standards. Preferably it should be of a round tubular steel construction to complement the traditional design of the waterway railings.

**18.** Informal access between the park and canal has been created by local people, demonstrating the desire for direct access to the park. Along this stretch, one or two new access points could be created, with easy access for wheelchairs. The gates would be locked at night, in accordance with the security policy of Victoria Park. Efforts should be made to increase the biodiversity of the towpath boundary verge with Victoria Park by reviewing the grass cutting regime and adopting a method to enhance floristic diversity.

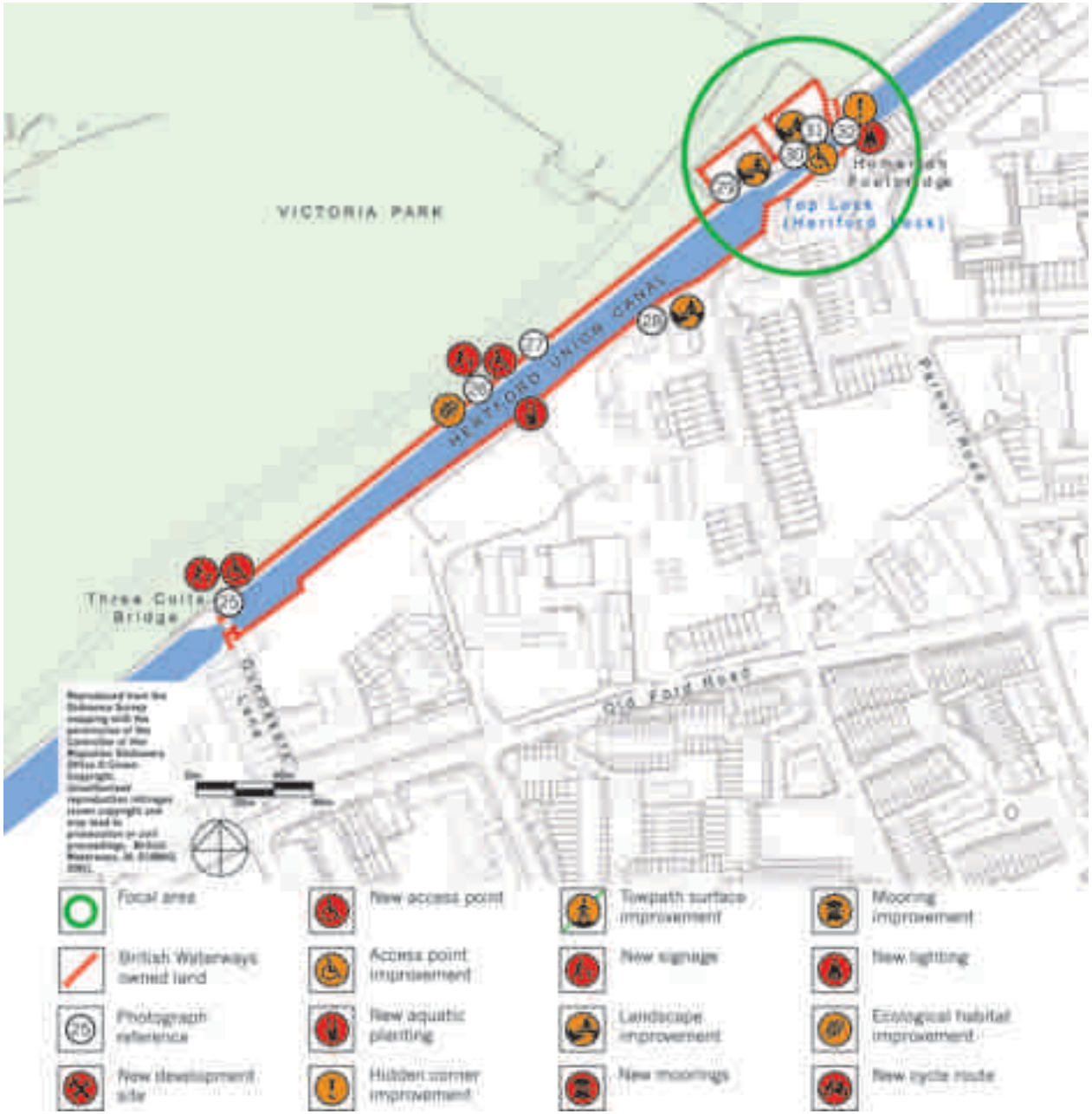
**19.** Redevelopment of the old wharves along this stretch has created a relatively flat waterfront, although the properties overlooking the canal provide good informal surveillance, for both the towpath and Victoria Park beyond. Victoria Park is known to be an important area for bats. The creation of an emergent fringe along the canal offside would provide habitat for invertebrates and therefore provide a food source for bats. Bat boxes could also be installed on bridges and trees.

**20.** Planting bays that have been neglected should be replanted, and emergent vegetation should be introduced at intervals along the offside edge (between the planting bays). This would have a positive 'knock-on' effect in providing a suitable habitat for damselflies & dragonflies, amphibians and waterbirds and provide a visual interest to the otherwise sterile facade.

**22.** Three Colts Bridge is a listed structure, but the brickwork is marred by graffiti. The grassed space in front of the bridge could be used for low planting which could possibly reduce access to the bridge for vandals. The hidden corner and pinch point under the bridge are unavoidable, but railings at the waters edge could improve safety.

**23.** The ramp at Three Colts Bridge is one of only two access points to Victoria Park. The ramp appears to meet 'Access for All' requirements, with handrail, landings and suitable gradient. Unfortunately it seems that maintenance of the ramp is lacking. The weeds should be cleared and the handrail repainted.

**24.** Signage and information at the Gunmakers Lane entrance to Victoria park contrasts with the lack of directional signage and information found next to the Hertford Union Canal. As this is one of the few existing park/canal entrances suitable for all members of the community, full information and interpretation should be provided at this point on Gunmakers Lane and on the towpath next to the base of the ramp. This information should make reference to the Hertford Union Canal and Victoria Park.



**25.** A new stepped access point directly from Victoria Park could be created east of Three Colts Bridge, to complement the ramped access to Gunmakers Lane, to the west of the bridge.

**29.** The boundary between the Canal Cottages and the canal should be improved, by replacing the old fence panels and barbed wire with more visually appropriate timber panels.

**26.** This long stretch of the towpath has a good visual link with Victoria Park, but lacks any direct access. Gated access should be provided to improve links between the park and the towpath. Efforts should be made to increase the biodiversity of the towpath boundary verge with Victoria Park by reviewing the grass cutting regime and adopting a method to enhance floristic diversity.

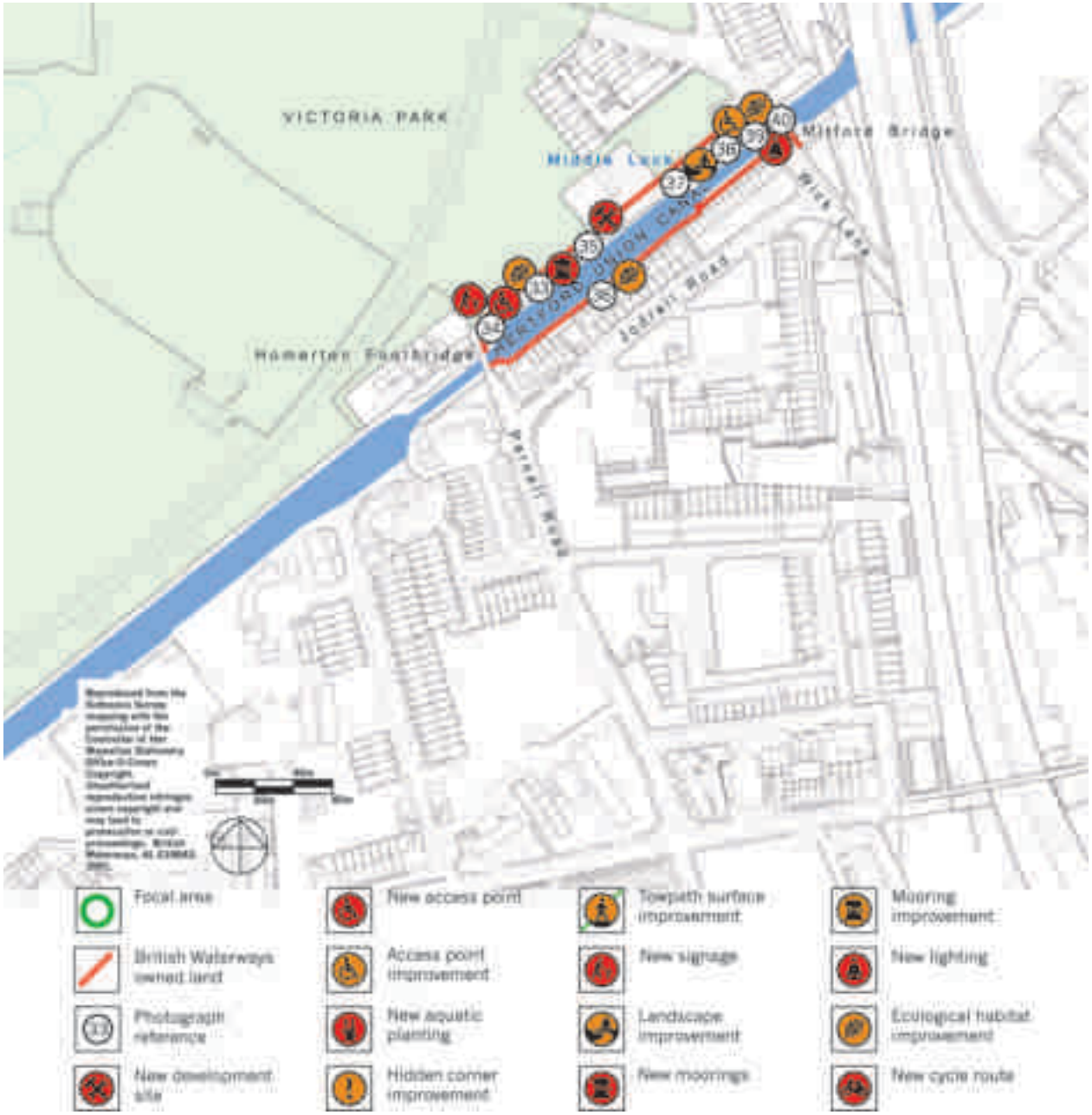
**27.** Aquatic vegetation, like this yellow water lily, is developing along this stretch. Emergent vegetation should be introduced at intervals along the offside edge (embayments / wides). This would have a positive 'knock-on' effect in providing a suitable habitat for damselflies & dragonflies, amphibians and waterbirds and also soften the long hard bank edge.

**28.** The interesting spaces created along the waterfront of this new development could be further enhanced by more dynamic outdoor living spaces along the waterfront, through some imaginative landscaping.

**30.** Top Lock (Hertford Lock) is a listed structure. The lock area has been repaved, but the edges of one quadrant have been poorly finished and bricks are already missing. The heel grips were omitted because of the size of the edging stones, but the finish of the quadrant would be improved if the heel grips were reinstated.

**31.** The towpath descends steeply alongside the lock. The gradient could be improved slightly by regrading and relaying the concrete towpath slabs, with a handrail, preferably black painted metal, with a round tubular profile, being provided at the base of the ramp under Homerton Footbridge. Full information and interpretation should be provided at the top of the ramp. This information should make reference to the Hertford Union Canal and the link with Victoria Park.

**32.** Homerton Footbridge is a listed structure. The towpath under the bridge is narrow, creating a pinch point. Safety should be improved, with a handrail along the waters edge. It should be preferably black painted metal, with a round tubular profile. Lighting should be installed to the underside of the bridge to reduce the effects of the blind corner at night.



**33.** 'Stop and Shop' visitor moorings are planned to the east of Homerton Footbridge, to encourage boaters to moor on the Hertford Union Canal, and to enable them to use local facilities like Victoria Park and access the shops in Parnell Road. Bird and bat boxes could be installed in the small wooded section to enhance the habitat.

**37.** The towpath descends steeply alongside the Hertford Middle Lock. The gradient could be improved slightly by regrading and relaying the concrete towpath slabs. The white painted bridge (Wick Lane) is subject to vandalism and should be repainted with graffiti resistant paint.

**34.** Stepped access could be installed to the east of Homerton Footbridge, in addition to the ramped access to the west of the bridge, giving direct access to the park.

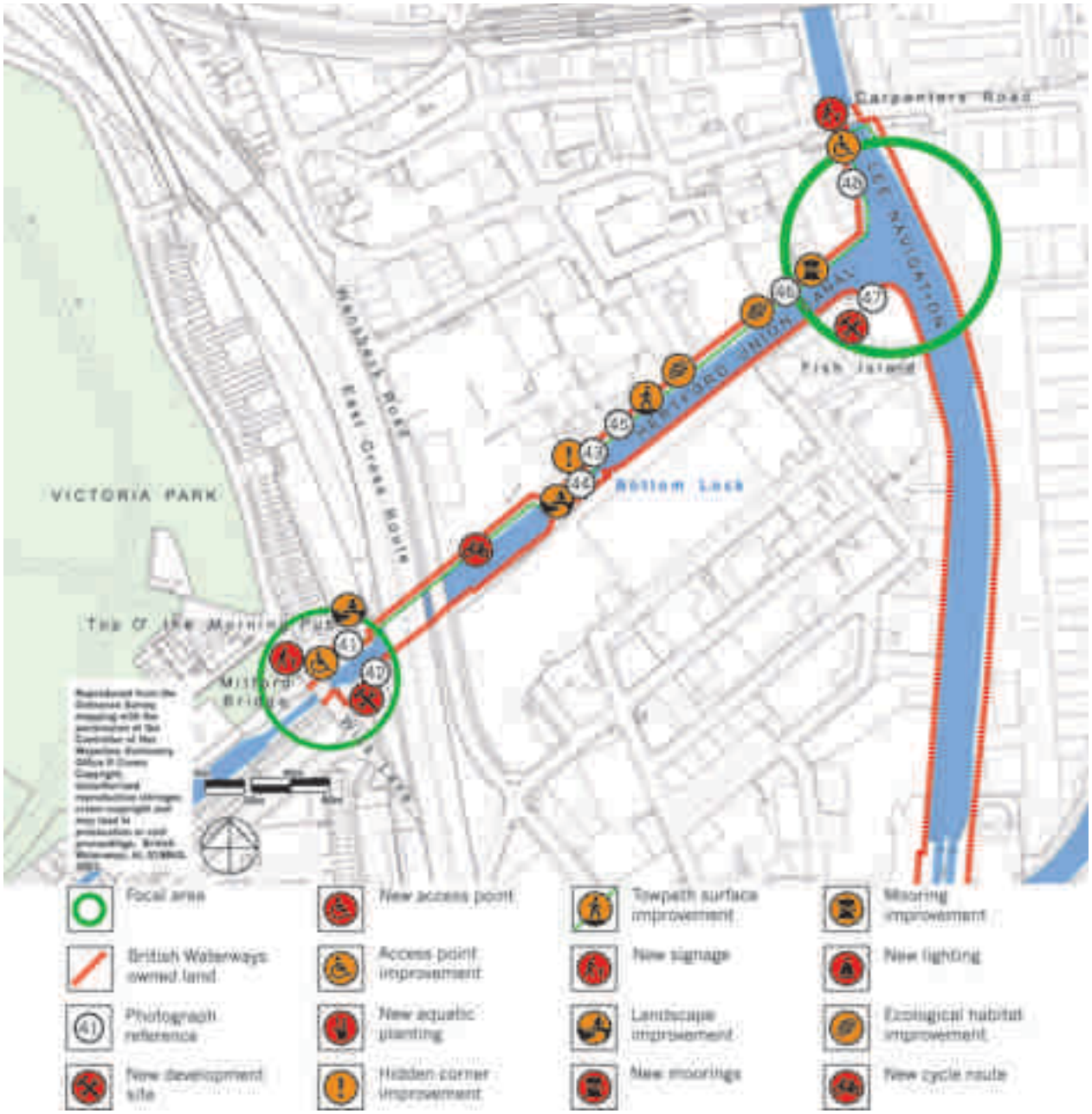
**35.** The strip of land adjacent to Victoria Park is retained by a concrete aggregate wall. The land is thickly planted with vegetation, mostly self-seeded. The sycamores are showing signs of scale insect infestation, although this is not thought to be permanently damaging. The wall is being damaged by tree roots, with the steel reinforcing rods being exposed in places. The area is not considered to be of great ecological value, and could be a potential development site. Some effort should be made to retain a few of the trees.

**36.** On the offside, there is an extensive area of Japanese Knotweed. The growth of the Japanese Knotweed needs to be monitored and controled, following the appropriate Environment Agency guidelines.

**38.** At Middle Lock, the lock area has been repaved, but would benefit from removal of weeds. Again the heel grips have been omitted from one of the quadrants, giving a poor finish to the edge between the brick and stone. Installing heel grips in brick would create a more effective finish between the brick and stone.

**39.** The towpath under the bridge is narrow, creating a pinch point. Safety should be improved, with a handrail along the waters edge. It should be preferably black painted metal, with a round tubular profile. The lock chamber is of ecological value due to the abundance of moss growing on the brickwork. Every effort should be made to retain the mosses and lower plants on the lock chamber during any future works.

**40.** Lighting should be installed to the underside of the Wick Lane Bridge to reduce the effects of the blind corners at night.



**41.** Sustrans Millennium Route 1 joins the towpath at Wick Lane, adjacent to a pub that presently uses the access route as a seating area. The access gate is kept locked by the publican. In order to install a 2 metre wide shared use path, a dedicated 2 metre wide access ramp could be built, leaving the pub with a higher level dedicated terrace and separate gated access from Wick Lane, maintaining security for the pub. Improved signage and information is essential.

**45.** The paved towpath ends close to Bottom Lock. To meet British Waterways shared use path status and Sustrans Millennium Route 1 requirements the towpath must be resurfaced to a minimum width of two metres, preferably using crushed stone or crushed brick. Along most of this stretch (until the junction with the Lee Navigation) it will be possible to accommodate the path whilst retaining the towpath verges on both sides of the path, whilst also reviewing the mowing regime to increase the ecological interest.

**42.** The site on the offside, adjacent to Mitford Bridge is presently derelict. The vegetation is mainly self-seeded sycamore, some growing in the wall of the canal. Clearance of the vegetation and redevelopment would not result in a serious loss of habitat. This site is part of a disused railway line, with a similar site being found on the towpath side. This site's use also needs to be addressed.

**43.** White painted walls and hidden corners, along with a lack of third party surveillance from domestic properties, give opportunities for graffiti and other anti-social behaviour, including drinking. Self clinging climbers, like ivy, should be used to cover walls subject to graffiti. New design solutions to the hidden corners need to be looked at.

**44.** The lock area has been renovated, again the heel grips were omitted because of the large edging stones under the balance beam. Although the absence of heel grips is not a major problem for boaters, the quadrants would be improved aesthetically if the brick heel grips were reinstated and they would be a added help to boaters.

**46.** The Lower Lee Project community trip boat, 'The Pride of Lee' moors along this stretch to allow passengers to disembark as the boat passes through the locks. The landing area is uneven and should be surfaced, preferably with crushed stone or crushed brick, contained by a granite sett edge. The growth of the invasive floating pennywort needs to be monitored and controled, following the appropriate guidelines.

**47.** 'Fish Island' at the junction of the Hertford Union Canal and the Lee Navigation is a potential development site. The area has developed the only significant area of marginal vegetation on the Hertford Union Canal that should be preserved and enhanced if possible. There is opportunity here for a pedestrian footbridge to link th e development site with the towpath.

**48.** The motor-cycle barrier should be replaced with a wheelchair friendly design in round profile tubular steel and it should be sited away from the blind corner. The ramp should be regraded to meet 'Access for All ' requirements and a handrail provided. The towpath should be resurfaced to the full width to meet the shared use pathway/Sustrans requirements. Improved signage and information is essential at this point to maximise towpath use.

# 3 ANALYSIS & RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Access Improvements
4.2 Linkage Improvements
4.3 Towpath Improvements
4.4 Community Safety
4.5 Lock Improvements
4.6 Development Sites
4.7 Landscape Improvements

# 4 ACTION PLAN

# Enhancement and additions to existing access, particularly for people with disabilities, including signage and interpretation

# 4 ACTION PLAN

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.3 Page 28 | 3 | The access ramp at the junction of the Regent's Canal and Hertford Union Canal is steeper than 'Access for All' recommendations and the band of granite setts at the top of the ramp makes wheelchair, pushchair and cycle access difficult. A new ramp should be integrated into the redevelopment of the warehouses. | | | | |
| 3.3 Page 28 | 3 | Improved signage and interpretation at the junction of the Hertford Union Canal and Regent's Canal would encourage use of the towpath. | | | | |
| 3.3 Page 28 | 4 | The access ramp alongside the warehouse units adjacent to the Hertford Union Canal does not meet 'Access for All' standards. If the warehouse units can not be redeveloped and a new ramp incorporated then the ramp should be regraded, resurfaced and a handrail provided. | | | | |
| 3.3 Page 28 | 4 | The motorcycle barrier alongside the warehouse units impedes wheelchairs / pushchairs etc, and should be replaced with one in accordance with 'Access For All' standards. Preferably it should be of a round tubular steel construction to complement the traditional design of the waterway railings. | | | | |
| 3.4 Page 30 | 10 | To increase pedestrian usage of the towpath, only stepped access could be created from the east side of Grove Road. | | | | |
| 3.4 Page 30 | 11 | Private gated access to the towpath could be created for the residents of Lakeview. | | | | |

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.5 Page 32 | 17 | There are no direct access points from the towpath to Victoria Park. Creating a new pathway and opening up the existing gates could reinstate access points direct from Victoria Park to the towpath and vice versa. The gates would be locked at night, in accordance with the security policy of Victoria Park. | | | | |
| 3.5 Page 32 | 18 | Informal access between the park and canal has been created by local people, demonstrating the desire for direct access to the park. Along this stretch between Skew Bridge and Three Colts Bridge, one or two new access points could be created, in line with 'Access For All' standards. The access points would be gated and locked at night, in accordance with the security policy of Victoria Park. | | | | |
| 3.5 Page 32 | 21 | The motorcycle barrier to the west of Three Colts Bridge impedes wheelchairs / pushchairs etc, and should be replaced with one in accordance with 'Access For All' standards. Preferably it should be of a round tubular steel construction to complement the traditional design of the waterway railings. | | | | |
| 3.5 Page 32 | 23 | The ramp at Three Colts Bridge is one of only two access points to Victoria Park. The ramp appears to meet 'Access for All' requirements, with handrail, landings and suitable gradient. Unfortunately it seems that maintenance of the ramp is lacking. The weeds should be cleared and the handrail repainted. | | | | |

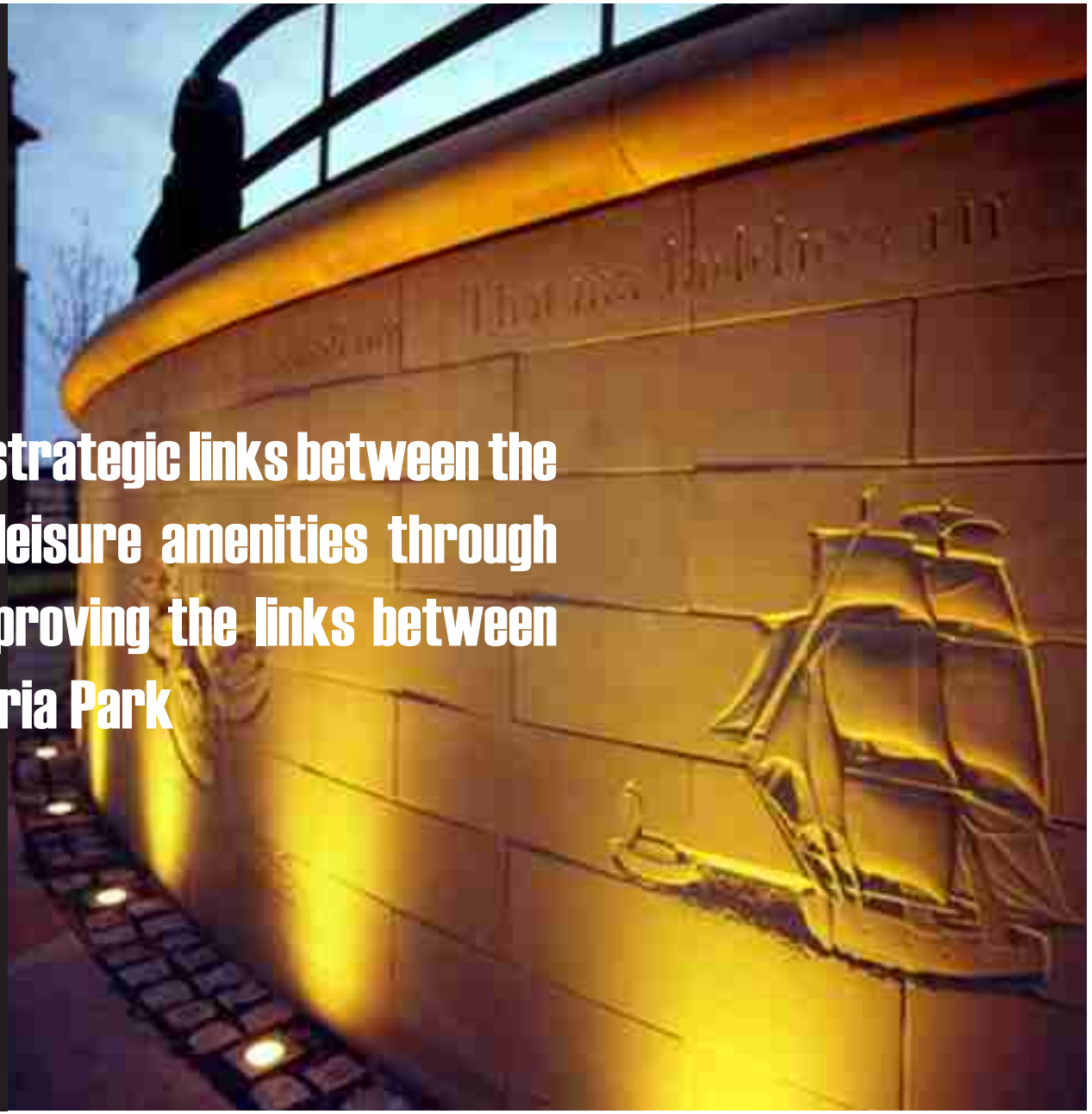
# 4 ACTION PLAN

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.5 Page 32 | 24 | Signage and information at the Gunmakers Lane entrance to Victoria park contrasts with the lack of directional signage and information found next to the Hertford Union Canal. As this is one of the two existing park/canal entrances suitable for all members of the community, full information and interpretation should be provided on Gunmakers Lane and on the towpath next to the base of the ramp. This information should make reference to the Hertford Union Canal and Victoria Park. | | | | |
| 3.6 Page 34 | 25 | A new stepped access point directly from Victoria Park could be created east of Three Colts Bridge, to complement the ramped access to Gunmakers Lane, to the west of the bridge. The stepped access would be gated and locked at night, in accordance with the security policy of Victoria Park. | | | | |
| 3.6 Page 34 | 26 | This long stretch of the towpath between Three Colts Bridge and Homerton Footbridge has a good visual link with Victoria Park, but lacks any direct access. Two new access points could be created, in line with 'Access For All' standards. The access points would be gated and locked at night, in accordance with the security policy of Victoria Park. | | | | |
| 3.6 Page 34 | 31 | Full information and interpretation should be provided at the top of the ramp at Homerton Footbridge. This information should make reference to the Hertford Union Canal and the link with Victoria Park. | | | | |
| 3.7 Page 36 | 34 | Stepped access could be installed to the east of Homerton Footbridge, in addition to the ramped access to the west of the bridge, giving direct access to the park. | | | | |

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.8 Page 38 | 41 | Sustrans Millennium Route 1 joins the towpath at Wick Lane, adjacent to a pub that presently uses the access route as a seating area. The access gate is kept locked by the publican. In order to install a 2 metre wide shared use path, a dedicated 2 metre wide access ramp could be built, leaving the pub with a higher level dedicated terrace and separate gated access from Wick Lane, maintaining security for the pub. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 41 | Signage and information at the Wick Lane entrance to Victoria park contrasts with the lack of directional signage and information found next to the Hertford Union Canal. Full information and interpretation should be provided on Wick Lane and on the towpath next to the base of the ramp. This information should make reference to the Hertford Union Canal, Victoria Park and the Sustrans Millennium Route 1. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 48 | The motorcycle barrier at the junction of the Hertford Union Canal and the River Lee Navigation impedes wheelchairs / pushchairs etc, and should be replaced with one in accordance with 'Access For All' standards. Preferably it should be of a round tubular steel construction to complement the traditional design of the waterway railings. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 48 | The ramp joining the towpath with Carpenter's Road should be regraded to meet 'Access for All ' requirements and a handrail provided. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 48 | Full information and interpretation should be provided on the Carpenter's Road access to the towpath. This information should make reference to the Hertford Union Canal, the River Lee | | | | |

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.8 Page 38 | 48 | Full information and interpretation should be provided on the Carpenter's Road access to the towpath. This information should make reference to the Hertford Union Canal, the River Lee Navigation and the Sustrans Millennium Route 1. | | | | |

Highlighting physical and strategic links between the canal and neighbouring leisure amenities through public art, especially improving the links between the waterway and Victoria Park



# 4 ACTION PLAN

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.3 Page 28 | 1 | The strategic link between the Regent's Canal and the Hertford Union Canal is poorly defined. There is a need to emphasise and improve the strategic routes, links and recreation opportunities available to users of the Hertford Union Canal and Regent's Canal (including the links to Bow Wharf, Mile End Park and Victoria Park). To create a new focal point at this location, public art should be incorporated to highlight this area. | | | | |
| 3.5 Page 32 | 24 | The strategic link between Victoria Park and the Hertford Union Canal at Three Colts Bridge is poorly defined. There is a need to emphasise and improve the strategic routes, links and recreation opportunities available to users of the Hertford Union Canal and Victoria Park. To create a new focal point at this location, public art should be incorporated to highlight this area. | | | | |
| 3.6 Page 34 | 31 | The strategic link between Victoria Park and the Hertford Union Canal at Homerton Footbridge is poorly defined. There is a need to emphasise and improve the strategic routes, links and recreation opportunities available to users of the Hertford Union canal and Victoria Park. To create a new focal point at this location, public art should be incorporated to highlight this area. | | | | |

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.8 Page 38 | 41 | The strategic link between Victoria Park and the Hertford Union Canal is poorly defined at Wick Lane. There is a need to emphasise and improve the strategic routes, links and recreation opportunities available to users of the Hertford Union Canal and Victoria Park (including the link to Sustrans Millennium Route 1). To create a new focal point at this location, public art should be incorporated to highlight this area. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 48 | The strategic link between the River Lee Navigation and the Hertford Union Canal is poorly defined. There is a need to emphasise and improve the strategic routes, links and recreation opportunities available to users of the Hertford Union Canal and River Lee Navigation (including the link to Sustrans Millennium Route 1). To create a new focal point at this location, public art should be incorporated to highlight this area. | | | | |

# 4 ACTION PLAN

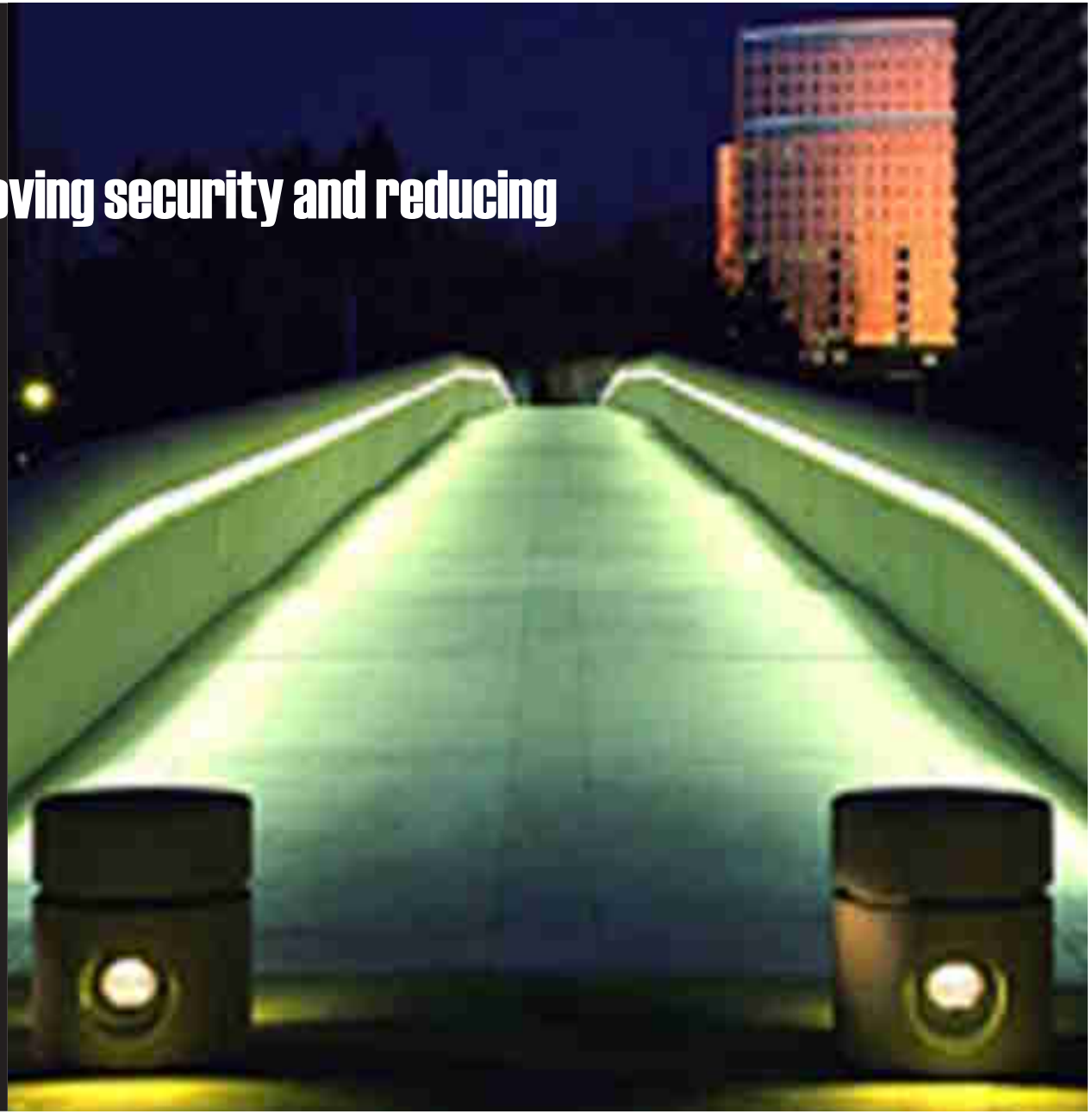
# Identify appropriate environmental improvements to the towpath, including accommodating Sustrans Millennium Route 1

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.4 Page 30 | 9 | The towpath under Grove Road Bridge is relatively wide. The opportunity should be taken to lay an integrated hard surfacing scheme to the towpath beneath the bridge. | | | | |
| 3.4 Page 30 | 15 | Efforts should be made to increase the biodiversity of the towpath verges (especially the boundary verge) between Grove Road Bridge and Skew Bridge by reviewing the grass cutting regime and adopting a method to enhance floristic diversity. | | | | |
| 3.5 Page 32 | 18 | Efforts should be made to increase the biodiversity of the towpath boundary verge with Victoria Park between Skew Bridge and Three Colts Bridge by reviewing the grass cutting regime and adopting a method to enhance floristic diversity. | | | | |
| 3.6 Page 34 | 26 | Efforts should be made to increase the biodiversity of the towpath verges (especially the boundary verge with Victoria Park) between Three Colts Bridge and Homerton Footbridge by reviewing the grass cutting regime and adopting a method to enhance floristic diversity. | | | | |
| 3.6 Page 34 | 31 | The towpath descends steeply alongside the Hertford Top Lock. The gradient could be improved slightly by regrading and relaying the concrete towpath slabs. | | | | |
| 3.7 Page 36 | 37 | The towpath descends steeply alongside the Hertford Middle Lock. The gradient could be improved slightly by regrading and relaying the concrete towpath slabs. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 45 | The paved towpath ends close to Hertford Bottom Lock. To meet British Waterways shared use path status and Sustrans Millennium Route 1 requirements the towpath must be | | | | |

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.8 Page 38 | 45 | The paved towpath ends close to Hertford Bottom Lock. To meet British Waterways shared use path status and Sustrans Millennium Route 1 requirements the towpath must be resurfaced to a minimum width of two metres, preferably using crushed stone or crushed brick. Along most of this stretch (until the junction with the Lee Navigation) it will be possible to accommodate the path whilst retaining the towpath verges on both sides of the path. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 45 | Efforts should be made to increase the biodiversity of the towpath verges (especially the boundary verge) between Wick Lane and the Lee Navigation by reviewing the grass cutting regime and adopting a method to enhance floristic diversity. | | | | |

# 4 ACTION PLAN

# Identifying ways of improving security and reducing the fear of crime



# 4 ACTION PLAN

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.3 Page 28 | 3 | The derelict warehouse units create a barrier to arrival at the Hertford Union Canal and Regent's Canal. Redevelopment of this site should include removing the blind corner created at the front of the warehouse units. | | | | |
| 3.3 Page 28 | 6 | The derelict warehouse units create a barrier to arrival at the Hertford Union Canal and Regent's Canal. Redevelopment of this site should include removing the blind corner created at the back of the warehouse units. | | | | |
| 3.3 Page 28 | 8 | A recent residential development adjacent to Grove Road Bridge might have been used to design out the hidden corner on the west side of the bridge. Any future opportunity to amend this should be taken. | | | | |
| 3.4 Page 30 | 9 | Lighting could be installed under Grove Road Bridge to help improve perceptions of safety at night, particularly if new access is created from Grove Road. | | | | |
| 3.4 Page 30 | 10 | The blind corner on the eastern side of Grove Road Bridge needs to be designed out. | | | | |
| 3.4 Page 30 | 14 | The proposed waterside redevelopment of the industrial warehouse on the offside would provide good informal surveillance of the towpath. | | | | |
| 3.6 Page 34 | 32 | Lighting should be installed to the underside of the Homerton Footbridge to reduce the effects of the blind corner at night. | | | | |
| 3.7 Page 36 | 40 | Lighting should be installed to the underside of the Wick Lane Bridge to reduce the effects of the blind corners at night. | | | | |

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.8 Page 38 | 43 | The blind corners on both sides of the electricity pumping station need to be designed out. | | | | |

# 4 ACTION PLAN

# Improving lock areas

# 4 ACTION PLAN

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.6 Page 34 | 30 | Hertford Top Lock is a listed structure. The lock area has been repaved, but the edges of one quadrant have been poorly finished and bricks are already missing. The heel grips were omitted because of the size of the edging stones, but the finish of the quadrant would be improved if the heel grips were reinstated. | | | | |
| 3.7 Page 36 | 38 | At Hertford Middle Lock, the lock area has been repaved, but would benefit from removal of weeds. Again the heel grips have been omitted from one of the quadrants, giving a poor finish to the edge between the brick and stone. Installing heel grips in brick would create a more effective finish between the brick and stone. | | | | |
| 3.7 Page 36 | 39 | The lock chamber at Hertford Middle Lock is of ecological value due to the abundance of moss growing on the brickwork. Every effort should be made to retain the mosses and lower plants on the lock chamber during any future maintenance works. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 44 | Hertford Bottom Lock has been renovated, again the heel grips were omitted because of the large edging stones under the balance beam. Although the absence of heel grips is not a major problem for boaters, the quadrants would be improved aesthetically if the brick heel grips were reinstated and the heel grips would be an added help to boaters. | | | | |

# Identifying potential development sites adjacent to the canal

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.3 Page 28 | 2 | The derelict warehouse units create a barrier to arrival at the Hertford Union Canal and Regent's Canal. Redevelopment of this site should include removing the warehouse units, regrading and resurfacing the entire area to create a focal entrance to the Hertford Union Canal and Regent's Canal. | | | | |
| 3.4 Page 30 | 14 | The offside industrial warehouse is a prime site for a waterside development. Residential, leisure and business would all be valid uses. | | | | |
| 3.7 Page 36 | 35 | A concrete aggregate wall retains the strip of land adjacent to Victoria Park just to the east of Homerton Footbridge. The land is thickly planted with vegetation, mostly self-seeded. The sycamores are showing signs of scale insect infestation, although this is not thought to be permanently damaging. Tree roots are damaging the wall, with the steel reinforcing rods being exposed in places. The area is not considered to be of great ecological value, and could be a potential development site. Some trees should be retained if possible. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 42 | The site on the offside, adjacent to Mitford Bridge is presently derelict. The vegetation is mainly self-seeded sycamore, some growing in the wall of the canal. Clearance of the vegetation and redevelopment would not result in a serious loss of habitat. This site is part of a disused railway line, with a similar site being found on the towpath side. This site's use also needs to be addressed. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 47 | 'Fish Island' at the junction of the Hertford Union Canal and the Lee Navigation is a potential development site. | | | | |

# Establish an identity for the Hertford Union Canal, through environmental and facility improvements

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.3 Page 28 | 5 | The potential redevelopment of the warehouse site should be an opportunity to open up this relatively narrow stretch of the canal corridor, and create a more positive and imaginatively landscaped focal area. | | | | |
| 3.3 Page 28 | 5 | The offside vegetation opposite the warehouse units should be retained and enhanced as part of the larger landscaping scheme for this area. | | | | |
| 3.3 Page 28 | 7 | The new development at Bow Wharf has potential for visitor moorings on this relatively wide stretch of the canal, subject to discussion with local residents and the businesses at Bow Wharf. | | | | |
| 3.4 Page 30 | 10 | The growth of Japanese Knotweed needs to be monitored and controlled along the towpath between Grove Road Bridge and Skew Bridge, following the appropriate Environment Agency guidelines. | | | | |
| 3.4 Page 30 | 12 | The retaining wall at the rear of Lakeview is in poor condition. Repairs have been carried out in the past, but tree roots are causing damage. The trees need to be accommodated in rebuilding the wall, with co-operation between the landowner and British Waterways. | | | | |
| 3.4 Page 30 | 13 | Emergent vegetation should be introduced at intervals along the offside edge (embayments / wides) between Grove Road Bridge and Skew Bridge. This would have a positive 'knock-on' effect in providing a suitable habitat for damselflies & dragonflies, amphibians and waterbirds. | | | | |
| 3.4 Page 30 | 14 | The proposed redevelopment of the offside warehouse would provide the ideal opportunity for visitor moorings to be part of the development. | | | | |

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
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| 3.4 Page 30 | 16 | This is the only stretch of the Hertford Union Canal with 'end of garden' moorings. The facility could be encouraged to develop boating on the waterway and provide visual interest for towpath users. | | | | |
| 3.5 Page 32 | 19 | The creation of an emergent fringe along the canal offside between Skew Bridge and Three Colts Bridge would provide habitat for invertebrates and therefore provide a food source for bats. Bat boxes could also be installed on bridges and trees. | | | | |
| 3.5 Page 32 | 20 | Planting bays that have been neglected should be replanted, and emergent vegetation should be introduced at intervals along the offside edge (between the planting bays). This would have a positive 'knock-on' effect in providing a suitable habitat for damselflies & dragonflies, amphibians and waterbirds and provide a visual interest to the otherwise sterile facade. | | | | |
| 3.5 Page 32 | 22 | Three Colts Bridge is a listed structure, but the brickwork is marred by graffiti. The Graffiti will need cleaning off and the grassed space in front of the bridge could be used for low planting which could possibly reduce access to the bridge for vandals. | | | | |
| 3.5 Page 32 | 22 | The hidden corner and pinch point under the bridge are unavoidable, but railings at the waters edge could improve safety. The handrail should preferably be black painted metal, with a round tubular profile. | | | | |

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
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| 3.6 Page 34 | 27 | Aquatic vegetation, like this yellow water lily, is developing along this stretch between Three Colts Bridge and Homerton Footbridge. Emergent vegetation should be introduced at intervals along the offside edge (embayments / wides). This would have a positive 'knock-on' effect in providing a suitable habitat for damselflies & dragonflies, amphibians and waterbirds and also soften the long hard bank edge. | | | | |
| 3.6 Page 34 | 28 | The interesting spaces created along the waterfront of this new development between could be further enhanced by more dynamic outdoor living spaces along the waterfront, through some imaginative landscaping. | | | | |
| 3.6 Page 34 | 29 | The boundary between the Canal Cottages and the canal should be improved, by replacing the old fence panels and barbed wire with more visually appropriate timber panels. | | | | |
| 3.6 Page 34 | 31 | Homerton Footbridge is a listed structure. The towpath under the bridge is narrow, creating a pinch point. Safety should be improved, with a handrail along the waters edge. It should be preferably black painted metal, with a round tubular profile. | | | | |
| 3.7 Page 36 | 33 | 'Stop and Shop' visitor moorings are planned to the east of Homerton Footbridge, to encourage boaters to moor on the Hertford Union Canal, and to enable them to use local facilities like Victoria Park and access the shops in Parnell Road. | | | | |
| 3.7 Page 36 | 33 | Bird and bat boxes could be installed in the small wooded section to the east of Homerton Footbridge to enhance the habitat. | | | | |

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.7 Page 36 | 36 | On the offside between Homerton Footbridge and Wick Lane, there is an extensive area of Japanese Knotweed. The growth of the Japanese Knotweed needs to be monitored and controlled, following the appropriate Environment Agency guidelines. | | | | |
| 3.7 Page 36 | 37 | The white painted bridge (Wick Lane) is subject to vandalism and should be repainted with graffiti resistant paint. | | | | |
| 3.7 Page 36 | 39 | The towpath under the Wick Lane Bridge is narrow, creating a pinch point. Safety should be improved, with a handrail along the waters edge. It should be preferably black painted metal, with a round tubular profile. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 43 | White painted walls adjacent to Hertford Bottom Lock, along with a lack of third party surveillance from domestic properties, give opportunities for graffiti and other anti-social behaviour, including drinking. Self-clinging climbers, like ivy, should be used to cover the walls subject to graffiti. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 46 | The Lower Lee Project community trip boat, 'The Pride of Lee' moors along this stretch to allow passengers to disembark as the boat passes through the locks. The landing area is uneven and should be surfaced, preferably with crushed stone or crushed brick, contained by a granite sett edge. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 46 | The growth of the invasive floating pennywort between Hertford Bottom Lock and the Lee Navigation needs to be monitored and controlled, following the appropriate guidelines. | | | | |

| Map Ref | Recommendation | | Potential Partners/ Consultees | Funding | Timescale/ Priority | Comments/Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3.8 Page 38 | 47 | The stretch between Hertford Bottom Lock and the River Lee Navigation has developed the only significant area of marginal vegetation on the Hertford Union Canal that should be preserved and enhanced if possible. | | | | |
| 3.8 Page 38 | 47 | There is opportunity here for a pedestrian footbridge to link the potential development site on the offside with the towpath. | | | | |

British Waterways

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